

**From Policy to Practice: The Effect of Teachers' Educational
Beliefs and Values on Their Interpretation of School-Based
Assessment Reform in Primary Schools in Malaysia**

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Abstract

This study investigated the beliefs and practices of primary school English language teachers in eastern Malaysia with regards to the country's School-Based Assessment (SBA) reform. The study also investigated the contextual factors affecting the teachers' beliefs and practices, aiming to understand the effects of these beliefs on their practice of SBA in order to extend our understanding of teachers' interpretations of SBA, the challenges influencing these interpretations and thus, what affects the implementation process.

After preliminary interviews with seven teachers, the study selected three who had an understanding of and knowledge about SBA and examined their claims to be implementing it. The study conducted classroom observations and then, using post-observation interviews, explored the reasons behind the teachers' practices. The teachers interpreted and implemented SBA using their pedagogical knowledge and beliefs and incorporating existing teaching-learning practices, and they showed awareness of the goals and aims of the SBA initiatives. However, contextual factors affected their implementation process, and thus, their practices deviated from some of the underlying principles and objectives of the SBA policy. The study pointed to a limited uptake of the SBA policy and provided evidence of the importance of studying both the teachers' prior or existing beliefs about assessment and the contextual factors, to understand the motives behind the teachers' actual assessment practices and their attitudes towards assessment reforms.

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Chapter 1: The context of the study

1.1 Setting the background for SBA

Many countries, including Malaysia, have introduced school-based assessment (SBA) or known as *Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah (PBS in the Malay acronym)* into their education systems. SBA is considered a complement to (or substitute for) the external public examination system (Black & Wiliam, 1998) and is perceived as playing a role in providing students with access to key twenty-first century knowledge and skills. The assumption is that SBA will increase the opportunities for students to learn the skills required to excel in education and employment (Ministry of Education, 2012).

The reason for my interest in this topic is that, as a primary school teacher, I have seen and experienced the struggles involved in putting SBA into practice. As teachers, my colleagues and I often express our disappointment and concerns regarding our knowledge and training as well as being unsure what SBA actually means for classroom practice. But despite the frustrations, we continue to implement SBA as mandated. I am interested in understanding how in-service primary school teachers interpret SBA. Specifically, I want to identify what they do and why they do it, in terms of SBA in the classroom. I also want to discover how closely practice matches what the policy actually mandates, and identify the implications of this for the reform policy, and for educational innovation more generally.

A number of researchers have suggested that teachers' beliefs and values can impact how they interpret new curriculum policies (e.g. Raselimo and Wilmot, 2013; Yook, 2010; Zhang and Liu, 2014). Uncovering teachers' beliefs and practices may therefore provide some understanding of how educational reform is being interpreted in the Malaysian context. This may contribute to knowledge concerning educational change and the kind of support in-service primary school teachers may need when implementing future curriculum reforms.

This study was designed to explore teachers' beliefs. This entails investigating their underlying conceptions about the English language, about teaching and learning, about roles within the classroom and about the influence these beliefs have on the teachers' interpretations of the Malaysian SBA policy.

In the following section and the remaining discussion in this chapter, I first deal with the rationale behind the introduction of SBA. This entails a discussion about the Malaysian primary school, the KSSR English curriculum (or *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah Bahasa Inggeris* in the Malay language) and what teachers are expected to do with SBA. A discussion of the concept of SBA in the Malaysian education system follows. I then delineate the characteristics of teaching and assessment in the Malaysian educational context, in particular the challenges in the teaching and assessment of the English language subject in Malaysian primary school classrooms. Finally, I briefly discuss the primary school teachers and parents' reactions towards SBA at the beginning of its introduction.

1.2 Rationale behind introducing SBA into the Malaysian education system

The rationale behind the introduction of the Malaysian primary school SBA will be discussed in four parts. The first relates to primary school education reform. The second part discusses the examination system or the summative assessment in Malaysia, while the third discusses the importance of the English language in Malaysia. Finally, a discussion about the government transformation programme is put forward which explains the reform of the KSSR English curriculum and the enforcement of the Malaysian SBA.

1.2.1 The Malaysian primary school education reform

In the early 1980s in Malaysia, Curriculum or *Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah* (KBSR) was introduced and intended to promote educational needs for students with a diverse range of abilities and to move from a traditional to a more child-centered curriculum. Although KBSR is known to have resulted in many achievements and much success, it was also, however, highly criticized by educationists partly because the related training was authoritarian in nature, meaning that the teachers were trained in how to teach but not how to be critical, reflective, innovative or adaptive (Abdul Rahman, 1987). Teachers' degree of implementation of the KBSR was also generally low, due to a lack of guidance and supervision (e.g. Noor Azmi, 1988). Under the KBSR, the primary schools were subject to two further innovations, the Smart School project in 1996 and the teaching of

mathematics and science in the English language in 2002. Both innovations are also known to have contributed to the formulation of the new curriculum and the establishment of the SBA policy in the education system. I will briefly discuss these two innovations.

The Smart School project was introduced in 1996 and focused on curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and teaching-learning materials as well as on student-centered learning as the basis for designing learning activities. Under the Smart School project, each subject is divided according to the students' learning abilities, so that they may learn at their own pace. Assessment is criterion-referenced and diagnostic. The assessment system was developed to measure students' achievements in terms of cognitive development, communication, social-emotional development and science technology (Ministry of Education, 1997). It also represented the first introduction to school-based assessment in the Malaysian primary school. However, some locally conducted studies (e.g. Omar and Sinnasamy, 2009; Sidhu et al., 2011) indicated that school-based oral assessments were not actually implemented as expected, because of a lack of ability and knowledge among the teachers regarding implementing such a school-based system. Thus, it was assumed by curriculum reformers that proper establishment and appropriate enforcement might help with the implementation of a school-based assessment system in the Malaysian primary school education system.

The teaching of Maths and science in English language programme (or simply known as Etems) was another innovation, introduced under the

KBSR curriculum in 2003. The huge increase in education-related information and knowledge in the late 1980s and early 1990s as well as the apparent decline in English language skills among Malaysians were the reasons behind the introduction of the teaching of maths and science in English language programme. However, this innovation was not consultative, because it was simply announced through the media by former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad (Gill, 2007). It was also heavily criticised from its initial introduction. Most of the issues stemmed from the gap between rural and urban students having widened. In addition, only 19.2% of secondary school teachers and only 9.2% of primary school teachers were reported to be sufficiently proficient in English (The Star, 2009). The teachers' linguistic incompetence was a huge influence on the termination of the Etems policy after only seven years of implementation. The reason for a new type of assessment in English language teaching and learning is further discussed in the next section.

1.2.2 Examinations or summative assessment in Malaysian primary school

Before the establishment of SBA, former Malaysian Education Minister Musa Mohammed had stated that the Malaysian education system needed a new approach. He emphasised that the system needed to be less exam-driven and should instead introduce a means by which to develop the creativity and skills that students needed to meet future challenges. The former Malaysian Director General of Education, Murad Mohd Noor, expressed his agreement with these views, arguing that the obsession with high-stakes national

examinations at primary, secondary and even university levels had reduced the time teachers had to develop students' talents, abilities and potential (Utusan Malaysian, 2005).

The teaching and learning in the Malaysian primary school classroom had somehow become too focused on planning and preparing students for national standardised examinations. Students were usually trained during the early years of primary school to answer exam format questions, so that, by Year Six (the last level of primary school), they would be well prepared to sit the national exams. Teaching had developed towards rote learning (drilling, repetition and memorising), but it was not only training and preparing the students, it was also training the teachers and parents nationwide to place a high value on examination results in all compulsory subjects in primary school, mainly English language, mathematics and science as well as the Malay language.

In the teaching of the English language, the examination system had made teachers focus on teaching literacy skills, mainly reading and writing, with the communicative component of the language apparently neglected (Ali, 2003). This does not mean that the teachers were not trained to teach and to create a balance by teaching all the functional skills, as specified in the syllabus (MOE, 1987; 2003; 2011; 2012; 2014). However, there was a mismatch between the policy and what was actually occurring in practice. The important issue for the Malaysian education system was to raise school standards and improve pupils' examination performance (Ali, 2003), and teachers had no choice but to adhere to this demand.

My experience of learning English reflected a similar situation, and being a primary school English language teacher years after my own learning experiences, I found that the examination system was still a big part of the school culture. Such a culture had been heavily criticised by academics who claimed that the Malaysian education system was too paper-oriented (test-oriented). The enforcement of SBA was expected to render the pressure of English language teaching and learning less intensive and to create a balance in teaching and assessing all the basic skills (i.e. speaking, reading and writing) (Ministry of Education, 2012), specifically focusing more on the English language communicative skills. The next section includes some reasons why the government feels that the communicative skill are so important.

1.2.3 The English language and its importance in Malaysia

Malaysia is a federal constitutional monarchy. It has a parliamentary system of government headed by a prime minister selected through periodic, multiparty elections closely modelled after the Westminster Parliamentary system, a direct influence of British colonisation (Orenstien, 2009). Malaysia is also a multiracial country comprising two distinct parts. West or Peninsular Malaysia comprises the three largest Malaysian groups, Malays (50.2%), who make up the majority of the peninsular population, Chinese (21.9%) and Indians (6.6%). In the east of Malaysia, the northern portion of the island of Borneo is composed of two distinct states, North Borneo (Sabah) and South Borneo (Sarawak). Together, these states form the largest indigenous groups, 51% of the population in the island and 20.4% of the portion of the

Malaysian population (Statistic Malaysia, 2014)¹. The emergence of mixed ethnicity in the peninsula began during the British colonisation in the 1800s when a large group of immigrant labourers from China and India were brought and channelled into tin mines and urban businesses; Indians were on rubber estates, while Malays and other indigenous groups were confined to the rice fields and the agricultural domain (Abdullah and Wong, 2006, p. 18).

Under British colonisation in the twentieth century, English-medium schools were formed to cater to the workforce in supporting staff positions for administrative purposes (Malakolonthu and Rengasamy, 2012). The English language was primarily used and became important for businesses and legislative councils, among colonial elites and in professional classes (Lee, 2012, p. 120). Although the Malay language was made an official language during this time, many favoured the English language, particularly those in urban areas (mostly the Chinese). This formed an economic gap between the rural populations because with the English language gave the pupils better economic advantages. Thus, the British introduced a diverse educational system of mainstream and vernacular schools of Malay, Chinese and Tamil (Powell, 2002). This began the establishment of two types of primary schools, the 'national school', which used Malay as the

¹ Malaysian population statistic retrieved from <http://mysidc.statistics.gov.my/index.php?lang=en#>

medium of instruction, and the 'national-type' school, which could use either English, Chinese or Tamil as the medium of instruction (Hashim, 2009).

After gaining independence from Britain in 1957, the country was in need of symbols by which she could identify 'herself' as a sovereign nation. Asmah, in Gill (2005), lucidly illustrates the ethnic and nationalistic reasons for the selection of the national language:

To the Malays and *bumiputera* people, that choice fell on Malay was the most natural thing. It is the language of the soil. Of all the *bumiputeras* or indigenous languages, Malay is the most advanced in terms of the function as language of administration, high culture, literary knowledge and religion. (p. 246)

Additionally, according to Gill, the Malays were also greatly frustrated when their official language was progressing at such a slow pace with regards to its implementation in 1965 through the educational sector. This was particularly the case in the field of higher education, which operated in a bilingual system — the Malay language for art subjects and the English medium for science and technology — a great concern for the Malay intellectuals that the English language was more favoured than the Malay language during this time. In 1969, the racial riot between Malays and Chinese² rose out of political differences about the early years of the language policy implementation, a time which Gill portrays as 'a black day in Malaysian's history'. This furthered the constitutional process of 1970, establishing the Malay language as the main language of instruction

² In 1969, a racial riot took place between the two largest ethnic groups, the Chinese and the Malays, and caused a massive number of deaths.

throughout the educational system (primary and secondary), including public universities.

In 1970, the National Education Policy was implemented. Through this policy, the English-medium schools were gradually converted to national schools, while the national-type schools were retained. The Malaysian government enforced the phasing out of the English language as the medium of instruction, and the switch to the Malay language as the medium of instruction was to be facilitated by learning the language as a subject in the national-type primary schools and through a one-year language transition class — the Remove Class, attached to the Malay-medium secondary schools.

Nevertheless, English would become second important language taught in schools; thus, common content syllabi for English for both primary and secondary schools were enacted. However, the switch between the languages saw a decline in the amount of English language exposure for Malaysians. So the change in the medium of instruction from English to the Malay language strengthened the position of Malay as the main thrust of transitional bilingual education but has led to precipitate deterioration in English language competence among Malaysians.

Thus, in 1979, the then Minister of Education, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, tabled the outcomes after a committee reviewed the implementation of the National Education Policy. The major reformation to the education system was the launching of the New Primary Schools Curriculum or *Kurikulum Baru*

Sekolah Rendah (KBSR). The learning outcomes outlined in the KBSR encompassed the four language skills — listening, speaking, reading and writing — reflecting the needs in the daily life of Malaysian society. The aim of the KBSR curriculum was:

to equip learners with basic skills and knowledge of the English language so as to enable them to communicate both orally and in writing, in and out of school. (*Sukatan Pelajaran Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah Bahasa Inggeris*, 2000, p. 1)

However, as the economy developed in the era of globalisation, Malaysia requires that English be used universally both for local employment and, in particular, for Malaysians to sustain themselves and remain globally competitive, the government realized that English language curriculum needed to focus on the communicative skills. Thus, the KBSR English language curriculum needed to be replaced with a new curriculum that place a clear emphasis on communicative skills. For the Ministry of Education, the communicative skill is viewed as the most important skill to acquire for both education and employment, locally as well as abroad.

1.2.4 The Malaysian transformation program

The Government Transformation Programme (GTP) in 2010. It was envisioned by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak as a way of making the country a developed and high-income nation through producing world-class human capital. For the government, world-class human capital means a sustainable, flexible, agile and mobile workforce with relevant knowledge and skills. One of the important variables of human capital is education (GTP, 2010). In response to this programme, the Ministry of

Education developed the Malaysian Educational Blueprint 2013–2025 and performed an overhaul of the entire primary school curriculum, which included the English language curriculum. It aimed to enhance the communicative skills of Malaysians in the language, thus addressing the aim of the GTP of equipping Malaysians with the necessary 21st century skills (such as focusing on the English language communicative skills).

The introduction of the GTP and the Malaysian Education Blueprint confirmed the decision to replace the existing KBSR curriculum with the Standard-Based Primary School Curriculum or *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah* (KSSR) (as discussed in the following section) and to enforce and strengthen SBA (as discussed in Section 1.2.1, SBA was firstly introduced for English language oral assessment). Policymakers and educators see SBA as a catalyst to this reform in achieving the aim of the KSSR English language curriculum and the GTP (Fook and Sidhu, 2013), for the following reasons:

- There was a need for the Ministry of Education to formulate a curriculum which would better suit the needs of English language teaching and learning in Malaysia after the closure of the teaching Maths and Science in English language programme, and a new assessment system needed to be established.
- SBA was expected to render the pressure of English language teaching and learning less intensive as well as to create a balance in teaching and assessing all the basic skills (i.e. speaking, reading and writing) (Ministry of Education, 2012).
- Malaysia required the universal use of the English language for employment locally and abroad, and the country needed, in particular,

to remain globally competitive. Thus, the view was that the communicative skill in the English language was an important skill to acquire. Hence with the enforcement and strengthening of SBA in the primary school education system the teachers are expected to emphasize the English language speaking component in their assessment (with the activities suggested) and not just focusing on its written aspect.

- Policymakers and educators viewed SBA as a catalyst in achieving the aim of the KSSR English language curriculum and the GTP because the government believed that with SBA in the system teachers will not only focus their assessment activities on the writing skills but also all the necessary skills particularly the listening and speaking component of the language (see Section 2.3.1 of its importance and the need for educational change)

1.3 The primary school and the English language curriculum

As discussed in Section 1.2, the national school (*SK* stands for *Sekolah Kebangsaan* in the Malay language) is attended by ‘son of soil’ in both east and west coast of Malaysia, whereas, national-type school (*SJKC* stands for *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina* in the Malay Language) is attended by the Chinese. It is common that parents send their children to a preferred school which reflects their own background.

The Malaysian primary school (*SK* and *SKJC*) is also divided into two levels: Level One (Years 1–3) and Level Two (Years 4–6). For each level and year, the primary school is provided with the Ministry of Education’s KSSR Standard Curriculum Document and Assessment. (At the time the study was conducted, Level One was provided with a separate assessment document

from the KSSR.) The aim for both Level One and Level Two KSSR primary school is:

to equip pupils with basic language skills to enable them to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts that is appropriate to the pupils' level of development. (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 1)

Although the emphasis of the KSSR curriculum is more on the communicative component of the English language, both stage one and two KSSR document objectives state that by the end of Year Six, the pupils are expected to be able to do the following:

- Communicate with peers and adults confidently and appropriately in formal and informal situations
- Read and comprehend a range of English texts for information and enjoyment
- Write a range of texts using appropriate language, style and form through a variety of media
- Appreciate and demonstrate understanding of English language literary or creative works for enjoyment, and
- Use correct and appropriate rule of grammar in speech and writing

(Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 2)

To achieve the aims and objectives mentioned above, the English curriculum is underpinned by six principles which teachers need to adhere to while delivering their lessons. I divided these principles into two main categories as explained and discussed in the curriculum, the teaching content and the assessment (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2011, pp. 9-12).

1. The teaching and learning of content

a. Back to basics

In this principle, it is essential that teachers begin with basic literacy skills in order to build a strong foundation of language skills. Basic listening and

speaking are introduced in order to help pupils enrich their understanding of the language. The strategy of phonics is introduced in order to help pupils begin to read, and a good foundation in penmanship will help pupils acquire good handwriting.

b. Lesson is fun, purposeful and meaningful

The teachers' lesson should emphasise meaningful contexts which integrate the language skills and allow pupils to learn by doing fun-filled activities; contextualised as well as purposeful activities will promote the fun element in language learning.

c. Learner-centered teaching

Teaching approaches, lessons and curriculum materials must suit the differing needs and abilities of pupils. It is important that appropriate activities and materials are used with pupils of different learning capabilities, so their full potential can be realised. The Mastery Learning strategy will ensure that pupils master all learning standards in order to help them acquire the language.

d. Integration of salient new technologies

The curriculum states that in line with growing globalisation, technology is used extensively for daily communication. Therefore English language teachers are encouraged to integrate technology in language learning, for example by using the Internet and other electronic media.

e. Character building

An important principle which the teachers are also to inculcate through the curriculum is character building. The teachers' lessons should be based on values which are incorporated in teaching and learning in order to impart the importance of good values for the wholesome development of individuals.

2. Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning is considered an important principle and is emphasised in the new curriculum. Teachers are expected to conduct continuous assessment as an integral part of learning. Through continuous assessment, teachers are also expected to be able to identify whether pupils have acquired the learning content (which will be discussed later in this chapter, Section 1.5.5 and 1.5.6). Therefore, the teachers are to conduct formative assessment as an ongoing process, while summative assessment is conducted at the end of a particular unit or term to gauge pupils' performance. The teachers are given the freedom to utilise a range of activities to assess pupils' performance orally or in writing.

1.4 The English language curriculum and SBA

The Malaysian School Based Assessment (SBA) or in the Malay language acronym is known as *Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah* (as stated earlier in the introduction) was formally introduced in 2011 under the English language KSSR curriculum. The English language curriculum is based on a structure with five modules (see Figure 1). Each stage in the curriculum is provided with the aims and principles which the teachers are to use and consider in the planning of their lessons. Thus, each module (e.g. listening and speaking) has its own content, learning and band (Level One) and performance standard (Level Two). The content standards specify the essential knowledge, skills, understanding and strategies which the students need to learn and acquire by Year Six. The learning standards describe in detail the degree and quality of proficiency which the students need to display in relation to the content standards for a particular year. Finally, the band or performance standards, detail the six levels of 'Bands' or

‘Standards’ (see Figure 2 and Appendix B), with descriptors (only for Level Two) for each level, based on clusters of learning standards. These levels serve as a guide for teachers in assessing their students’ development and growth in the achievement of the required learning standards.

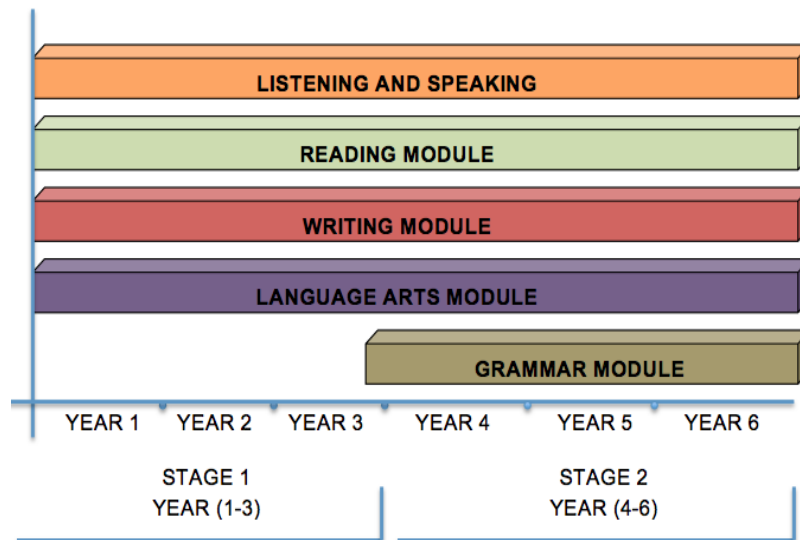


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the curriculum model (Ministry of Education, 2011, p.6)

1.4.1 What are English language teachers expected to do with SBA?

Section 1.4 discusses the way in which teachers are to create a balance in assessing all the language skills, mainly listening, speaking, reading and writing. The following discussion specifies some examples of what teachers may do in order to conduct assessment activities with the particular modules mentioned above. The Malaysian SBA gives a number of examples of assessment or evaluation, including classroom observations, oral presentations, checklists, tests, quizzes, homework, creative work and

writing. Nor does the Malaysian SBA limit these activities only to the classroom; their implementation can also occur outside the classroom (Ministry of Education, 2011).

For example, in the listening and speaking modules, teachers may use checklists to record their students' progress as part of the assessment activities while they perform or speak during assembly (e.g. making announcements, reciting poems, singing in groups or telling stories). In the classroom, teachers may use classroom observations to observe their students' engagement in conversations with peers or activities (e.g. role play, drama).

In the KSSR reading module, teachers may use questions and activities which incorporate graphic and/or semantic organisers, story maps or summarisation to assess their students' ability to read and comprehend texts. In the writing component of the KSSR curriculum, teachers may incorporate elements of written projects or activities (e.g. tests, exams, class exercise, journals, diaries, poems, writing scripts, dialogues and song lyrics). Teachers may also use creative projects to assess students' progress (i.e. giving instructions so that the students can produce creative work such as making masks, puppets etc.).

The SBA document also states that students should have opportunities for self-assessment and should receive input on their progress. For example, when students are completing homework, class exercises or creative work, teachers should give them the opportunity to evaluate how well they have

done, according to certain performance standards or bands (a detailed explanation about scoring of SBA is explained later on in Section 1.5.5). Teachers are encouraged to give students feedback on their work regarding whether they are meeting the expected band or standard. Teachers also need to explain or discuss the best way to improve performance to the students' desired levels. Another possible means of assessment is for students to choose a product (e.g. their best piece of written work) for the teacher to assess (see Appendix A) and to keep the product as evidence (when necessary).

Briefly, teachers should utilise a variety of assessment techniques to monitor their learners' language growth and development. The KSSR SBA document also says that homework and classroom exercises should be continuous assessment tools, as they are believed to be useful in providing immediate feedback. These exercises should provide the guidance, motivation and correction which the students need to help them focus on learning.

Apart from that, the English language syllabus and the SBA document emphasise that formative assessment, or assessment for learning, is an important aspect of teaching and learning, so good pedagogy always includes appropriate assessment. The document says that both formative and summative assessment are carried out in order for the teachers to gain feedback on their students' learning and to provide the teachers themselves with any information necessary to make changes to their teaching style which will enhance learners' outcomes. Thus, formative assessment is to be carried out during teaching and learning in the classroom, and summative

assessment at the end of a particular unit or semester. Appendix A shows further descriptions of suggested teaching-learning and assessment activities within each module.

1.4.2 How do the teachers use the curriculum and guidebook to determine the aim of the lesson and the materials to be used?

Malaysian primary school English language teachers are provided with a set of the KSSR English language curriculum, assessment documents and a guidebook as stated earlier. The teacher needs to refer to the KSSR English language curriculum to determine what skills the teacher needs to teach. The teacher also needs to refer to the assessment document to identify how each particular skill is to be assessed. However, the guidebook provides suggestions or ideas for the teachers on how the teaching and assessment activities (e.g. speaking, reading, writing and language arts components) could be carried out in a lesson. The teachers are also allowed to create their own sets of teaching and assessment activities as well as materials to be used in the lesson. Therefore, when determining the aim of the lesson it depends on what English language component the teacher would like his or her pupils to acquire during the lesson. The teacher can either use directly the aims stated in the assessment document or they can also create their own (as long as it is aimed at the specified level of achievements stated in the assessment document). For example, if the teacher had decided that he or she would like his or her pupils to develop the skills of listening and speaking component of the KSSR English language module (see Figure 3), then the teacher would also refer to the assessment document (Figure 4) to

determine which of the sub-skills he or she would try to develop. Then, the teacher can refer to the guidebook (if he or she wants) to get some ideas of how the teaching and assessment activities could be organised or the materials she could use in the lesson. The teacher may repeat the same aim as well as using the same teaching-assessment activities and materials (as they had used in their previous lessons) if the teacher had noticed that his or her pupils had not yet achieved the required skill. However, most of the time because of the teachers' schedule and other related factors (see discussion in Section 1.6) may also determine the aims of the lesson and the selection of the teaching assessment activities and materials.

1.5 The concept of SBA

The dissemination of SBA included a frequent answer guidebook (Q&A booklet in Malay language) and an English language version available in the Ministry of Education webpage. The document consists of relevant questions related to the implementation of SBA. The guidebook covers the following topics.

1.5.1 What is SBA?

The question and answer Q&A booklet states that SBA is introduced as part of the National Transformation Programme to produce 'world-class human capital' (see, Section 1.2.4). SBA began implementation in 2011 and is defined as a holistic form of assessment by which to measure progress in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains encompassing intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical aspects. The revised KSSR curriculum is

designed to address these domains. SBA covers both academic and non-academic components of the KSSR curriculum. There are four components to the Malaysian SBA system: 1) central assessment, 2) school assessment, 3) assessment of sports and co-curricular activities and 4) psychometric assessment. It is expected that teachers will carry out SBA continuously in schools during the teaching and learning process.

The document stated that SBA is not a new concept in the Malaysian education system; the practice of giving homework and quizzes and holding question and answer sessions, which is considered an essential part of SBA activities, was already the norm in teachers' classroom practices (see, Section 1.6). However, it claims that improvements need to be made in order for the teachers to measure the achievements of the students' performance. This study focuses on the school assessment component and its implementation from 2015 to 2016, the duration of the study.

1.5.2 Differences between SBA and the present assessment

In differentiating SBA and the existing summative system (the semester or year end examination which is used presently in all primary schools to report pupil progress, as explained in Section 1.2.2), the SBA Q&A booklet repeatedly emphasises that it is holistic and therefore considers all aspects of assessment (physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual). The Malaysian SBA also encompasses both assessment *for* learning and *of* learning; it is expected to enable the teachers to assess both the learning outcomes and the learning process. Thus, formative and summative assessments should

be employed in the teachers' practices — formative assessment during the learning process and summative assessment at the end of a learning unit. The SBA also gives the teachers due recognition in carrying out formative assessments at their discretion. In giving the teachers the freedom to choose how and when they are to conduct formative assessments, the Malaysian SBA claims that the teachers' integrity, credibility and reliability may be enhanced through this process. The SBA Q&A document also claims that teachers are the most suitable people to carry out the assessment, because they:

- can continuously monitor their pupils' growth;
- can provide constructive feedback to improve pupils' learning abilities;
- better understand the context and environment most conducive to assess pupils and
- appraise and provide feedback based on standard performance.

(Retrieved from the Ministry of Education webpage)

Hence, the SBA provides the elements of value through the assessment conducted. For example the SBA document explains, the constructive and meaningful feedback which the teachers are expected to do as part of the learning process can contribute to the pupils' learning progress. As a result, it is hoped that pupils will be motivated to work harder and perform better in their learning and in their future. Feedback based on the performance standard should help and enable pupils to identify their strengths and weaknesses, common errors and learning areas which need more attention. The document stated that this (the feedback based on performance standard) will help to identify the strategies that may help improve their

learning. Pupils' performance or results were initially to be presented in the form of a descriptive and formative report generated using the assessment report for school-based assessment or *Sistem Pelaporan Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah* (SPPBS in the Malay acronym), a system database which stores all information pertaining to pupils' progress from Year One to Form Five. However, at the time this study was conducted, from June 2015 to June 2016, the teachers in the study explained that it had been transferred to an offline database in Microsoft Excel (see explanation in Section 1.5.5 and Appendix D).

In contrast, the assessment before SBA focused more on the learners' achievements through examination results. This was mainly an assessment of learning at the end of the learning process and was largely summative in nature, presenting results through letter grades. SBA was intended to introduce a balance between assessment for and of learning. Therefore, with its establishment, it was hoped that the Primary School Standardised Test or *Ujian Pentaksiran Sekolah Rendah (UPSR)*, conducted at the end of primary school in Year Six), would no longer be such a high-stakes examination. But it is explained that it would still be part of primary school Year Six assessment and the results together with their SBA achievements would be used to report the pupils and the school's progress. However, from my reading it is unclear how SBA and the Year Six assessment marks are combined or how the marks would affect the pupils' future.

1.5.3 The key terms used in the Malaysian SBA

Several concepts further help us understand how SBA is implemented in the education system. The Q&A guidelines defines these terms as follows:

i. Performance Standard/ Band

The Performance Standard is a set of statements detailing an individual's achievement and mastery within a certain discipline, in a specific period of study and based on an identified benchmark. The Performance Standard will help inform the appraiser of the best and most suitable way to assess an individual fairly in a focused manner, based on the predetermined standard set. In particular, the band system or performance standards detail the six levels of bands or standards, with descriptors (only for Level Two) for each level based on clusters of learning standards. These levels serve as guides for teachers in assessing their students' development and growth in the acquisition of the required learning standard (see, Figure 4 and Appendix B).

ii. Standard Reference Assessment Document

The Standard Reference Assessment Document is introduced to track the development of each pupil through his or her performance. In this process, it is possible to determine what each pupil knows (*tahu*), understands (*faham*) and can apply (*boleh buat*) or whether he or she has mastered what has been learned based on the Performance Standard mapped in the standard curriculum (see, Figure 2). In addition, the Standard Reference does not compare a pupil's achievement with his/her peers; instead, it will report each individual's growth and development by comparing his/her performance against a statement standard.

iii. Standard Curriculum Document

The Standard Curriculum Document is the name given to the new primary school curriculum or in the Malay acronym KSSR.

iv. Learning Standard

The learning standards describe in detail the degree and quality of proficiency which the students need to display in relation to the content standards for a particular year (in 1.1.1: Figure 3 and see Section 1.5.5 for the relation between learning standard and performance band/ standards).

v. Content Standard

The content standards specify the essential knowledge, skills, understanding and strategies which the students need to acquire at the end of their primary schooling (Year Six, see 1.1; Figure 3).

BAND	PERNYATAAN STANDARD
1	Know basic skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing.
2	Know and understand words, phrase and sentences heard, spoken, read and written.
3	Know, understand and apply knowledge obtained through listening, speaking, reading and writing.
4	Apply knowledge obtained through listening, speaking, reading and writing in various situation using good manners.
5	Demonstrate well the ability to apply knowledge of listening, speaking reading and writing for various purposes using admirable manners.
6	Appreciate literary works by performing and presenting ideas using exemplary manners.

Figure 2: Band level specification for Year 1-3 (Ministry of Education, 2011, p.5)

1.5.4 Quality assurance for SBA

To measure the quality of SBA, the Q&A guidelines explain that quality is determined through the following criteria:

i. Mentoring

A process of guiding and facilitating the teachers in carrying out SBA according to the correct procedures and principles. The

people who are responsible to conduct mentoring as mentioned will be the *Ketua Panitia/ Bidang* (Head of Subject Panel), *Guru Cemerlang Mata Pelajaran* (Excellent Nominated Teachers), Master Trainers and Headmasters/ Principals or any appointed teacher can take on the role of Internal Mentors. External Mentors are officers from the Examinations Syndicate, State Education Department and District Education Departments.

ii. Standardization

This process ensures the uniformity of scores with reference to the Performance Standard based on the rubrics of assignments. Internal standardization is coordinated by the *Ketua Panitia, Ketua Bidang, Guru Cemerlang Mata Pelajaran*. External standardization is coordinated by officers appointed by the Examinations Syndicate.

iii. Monitoring

Monitoring ensures that the correct procedures have been adhered to, to ensure the reliability and credibility of the assessment outcome. It is the process of ensuring SBA is conducted according to set guidelines and procedures. Internal monitoring is conducted by a teacher chosen by the school's SBA Committee. External monitors can be any officers from the Ministry of Education. Teachers from neighbouring schools can also cross monitor SBA activities. Teachers are encouraged to do so for mutual benefit. Accordingly, the guideline states that cross monitoring will enhance the reliability and credibility of the SBA conducted (see, Chapter 5, Section 5.1.5 how monitoring was conducted since SBA was introduced and implemented).

1.5.5 Scoring of SBA

Although the SBA document stated that the teachers need to incorporate both formative and summative assessment for reporting, it was not clearly

stated how the teachers were to do this (particularly how the marks are combined to present pupils' overall semester or yearly progress). However, the following description shows how the SBA scores are conducted.

Each competency within the KSSR syllabi is mapped to a corresponding band or performance standard (see Figure 4 and Appendix B). The band/performance standard requires the teachers to provide 'evidence' (which the teacher needs to see and record) that each child is able to hear, say, read or write at the required level for each band/standard. As an example, the listening and speaking skills reveal that when a child provides evidence that he/she is 'able to speak with correct word stress' (see Figure 3: Learning Standard 1.1.1) by taking part in any classroom activities as instructed by the teachers (e.g. group work or individually through any classroom performance, following instructions, reading text; see Appendix A) and it is witnessed and recorded by the teacher, that student will have achieved one of the bands/performance standards in the module. The bands/performance standards may be set, but the teachers still have considerable freedom in terms of the evidence they use to evaluate the children (e.g. activities which they use, materials, structure of the lesson).

As discussed above, for formal recording of the SBA score progress, the ministry has introduced and developed an offline system using Microsoft Excel for both stages (that includes not just descriptive results but also grades, see Appendix D section [d]). The discussion below explains in further detail how this system is to be used.

CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARDS Year One	LEARNING STANDARDS Year Two
1.1 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to pronounce words and speak confidently with the correct stress, rhythm and intonation.	1.1.1 Able to listen and respond to stimulus given with guidance: a) environmental sounds b) instrumental sounds c) body percussion d) rhythm and rhyme e) alteration f) voice sounds g) oral blending and segmenting	1.1.1 Able to listen and respond to stimulus given with guidance: a) environmental sounds b) instrumental sounds c) body percussion d) rhythm and rhyme e) alteration f) voice sounds g) oral blending and segmenting
	1.1.2 Able to listen to and enjoy simple stories.	1.1.2 Able to listen to and enjoy simple stories.
	1.1.3 Able to listen to, say aloud and recite rhymes or sing songs.	1.1.3 Able to listen to, say aloud and recite rhymes or sing songs.
	1.1.4 Able to talk about a stimulus with guidance.	1.1.4 Able to talk about a stimulus with guidance.

Figure 3: Sample of content and learning standard Year 1 and 2 for listening and speaking module (Ministry of Education, 2011, p.14)

BAND	PERNYATAAN STANDARD	DESKRIPTOR	EVIDENS
1 Tahu	B1 Know basic skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing.	B1 DL1 Say aloud and recite rhymes or sing songs with guidance. B1 DL2 Enjoy action songs and jazz chants through non-verbal response. B1 DB3 Recognize and articulate initial, medial and final sounds in single syllable words. B1 DB4 Blend phonemes into recognizable words and read them aloud.	B1 DL1 E1 Able to do any of the following with guidance: - recite rhymes - sing songs - sing in groups B1 DL2 E1 Able to do any of the following: a) jazz chants b) action songs through gestures and facial expressions. B1 DB3 E1 Able to pronounce and articulate the phoneme correctly (a) (ch) (sh) (th) (ng) (b) (ai) (ee) (igh) (oa) (oo) (c) (ar) (or) (ur) (ow) (oi) (d) (ear) (air) (ure) (er) B1 DB4 E1 Able to form single syllable words by blending phonemes.

Figure 4: Sample of band system specification and descriptors for Year 1 listening and speaking module (Ministry of Education, 2011, p.6)

1.5.6 The SBA recording system and reporting of SBA

The students' assessment progress is to be recorded three times per year using four Microsoft Excel (Appendix D) spreadsheets: recording form, achievement form, semester test report and the students' individual report. The process requires the teacher to fill in the first and third spreadsheets in the system, so the system is able to generate the learners' achievement form and students' individual reports as their semester and yearly learning progress. These outcomes can then be reported to parents on a semester/yearly basis, be archived along with the learners' best learning evidence (e.g. worksheets, activities etc., although this is not compulsory) and be kept for review and moderation and to use as feedback on teaching and learning. When the teachers are not required to record in the system, the primary school teachers are encouraged by the Ministry of Education to write a descriptive report of their classroom assessment results in the form of reflections (after each lesson and assessment is conducted) at the end of their lesson plan activities and their scores at the back page of the lesson book (Ministry of Education, 1999). Writing reflection is seen as a way to continuously monitor the learners' growth and help them with their learning abilities as well as to allow the teachers to modify their own teaching according to their learners' needs.

In order to give a clear understanding, the Malaysian Ministry of Education Q&A handbook (2011, pp. 13–14) summarises the following details.

- The SBA is carried out continuously in school by the teachers during the teaching and learning process.
- It is conducted by the learners' own subject teacher.
- It focuses on both formative and summative assessments.
- It does not compare a learner's achievements with those of his/her peers; instead, it reports and compares each learner's growth and development against his or her performance standard.
- It gives the teachers the freedom to choose or adapt the kind of formative and summative assessment activities according to the school context and environment.
- The assessment conducted should allow the teachers to continuously monitor the learners' growth and provide constructive feedback to help improve learners' learning abilities based on the performance standards they have achieved.

This means that the SBA programme intends for the teachers to become the assessors of their learners based on their own personal judgement, which is very different from the previously established method of assessment. Students are also not necessarily evaluated at the end of the year or at the end of a particular unit but are instead continuously evaluated throughout the learning process, with the results used as information to make necessary adjustments on teaching and learning needs.

This also means that by the end of the assessment period, pupils are assumed to be able to assess their own learning abilities through the feedback provided, while the teachers improve their teaching by observing their pupils' learning. This could be an extremely challenging task for a primary school pupil and some teachers, resulting in a significantly increased workload. However, in Malaysia, it is customary that whatever reform is being introduced into the education system, teachers must implement the

initiatives as mandated. Open rejection is not usually an option in the Malaysian context. It is also a culture where teachers do what they are told, although this does not mean that the policy is necessarily being implemented as intended (e.g. Omar and Sinnasamy, 2009). The teachers often use the phrase by hook or by crook (saying the phrase in the English language), meaning that no matter how difficult the task directed to them by top-level management, they must find ways to implement it. However, at the beginning of the introduction of SBA, primary school teachers expressed some concerns about the system. This was partly because Malaysian primary school teachers are used to some of the norms of conducting teaching and assessment which will be discussed and described in the next section.

1.6 Characteristics of English language teaching assessment and its challenges

It is widely recognised that sociocultural context or setting plays a significant role in the way teachers conduct their teaching (Tudor, 2001; Orafi, 2008; Wedell, 2009). This affects what teachers and students believe to be the norms in the ways a lesson should be taught, learned and assessed in that particular setting. In this section, I will describe the characteristics of teaching and assessment in the Malaysian context.

As discussed in Section 1.2, the Malaysian primary schools are divided into two types, the national primary school (SK) is attended by the Malays in the west coast of Malaysia and by the 'bumiputras' or 'sons of soil' (the

indigenous people in the east coast of Malaysia). The Tamil-type primary school (SJKT stands for *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil* in the Malay language) (only in the west coast of peninsular Malaysia) is attended by Indians, whereas the SJKC is attended by the Chinese. The language medium of instruction in SK is the Malay language, whereas it is Telugu in SJKT and Mandarin in SJKC. However, the English language curriculum (as one of the compulsory curriculum in the Malaysian primary school, see, Section 1.3) expects the teachers to teach using the English language entirely in their teaching and learning. Listening to the teacher modelling the spoken language is hoped to develop learners' interest in articulating and learning the English language. Nevertheless, it is not always possible for teachers to carry out their teaching using the English language throughout their entire lesson. Most commonly, teachers will use a mixture of English and Malay or will teach in the language of instruction which their schools are using. Translating the English language into the Malay language or into the students' mother tongue (the language in which the pupils were brought up with at home by their parents other than the Malay language) is also a common practice in the Malaysian English language teaching context. The teachers' teaching is also influenced by the English language backgrounds of the students. More English language is used when the students have a good English language background (pupil with knowledge of the English language learnt from home taught or exposed by their parents) and a mixture or language translation if they have less or none. The teachers' pedagogy is also influenced by their own English language competence and proficiency. Therefore, the use of English for teaching and learning and how

much the language is to be used in the lesson depends on the capability of the teachers and the students themselves. To make a particular task understandable and clear, the teachers tend to use the language which both the teachers and students feel most comfortable with and which is most convenient. In this case, the Malay language is often used to teach the English language and to give a clear explanation of the assessment to be conducted later on.

I also stated in section 1.3 that the primary school consist of two levels. The lower primary (Level One) consists of Year One to Year Three (pupils age from 7-9) and the upper primary (Level Two) consists of Year Four to Six (pupils age from 10-12). The actual teaching of English language subject starts from Year One. Therefore, pupils in Year One will only experience formal teaching and learning of the English language subject during this time in which they are taught the four English language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing as discussed earlier by trained English language teachers. This means that the pupils are not yet used to the type of assessment that I am investigating in this study. This potentially lays down a challenge for teachers of younger age groups in providing feedback for learners, an issue which I am also investigating in this project.

In terms of class size, it is normal for Malaysian primary school teachers to have thirty to forty (sometimes more) pupils in a classroom. Usually these classrooms were built only to accommodate fewer than thirty pupils. In dealing with large class sizes, pupils in each schools are usually screened and placed in different classes according to their abilities or according to

their literacy and numeracy performance (that is if there are extra classrooms available in the school). In addition, Malaysian English language teachers usually teach more than one class daily (sometimes 3 or 4 group of classes in different years or levels). Additionally, most primary school classroom in Malaysia are built with either wood or concrete walls and floors (in a rectangular shape classroom). The windows in the classrooms (the right and left side view) take up most of the walls which means that wider windows are built and with two exit doors to make ventilation system more effective for the Malaysian hot climate weather (fans and lights are supplied in each classrooms; the numbers of fans depends on how large the classrooms are). Therefore, the acoustic environment is challenging- Malaysian primary school teachers may not hear their pupils clearly and may hear noise from other classrooms.

Furthermore, the introduction of the new English language KSSR curriculum in 2011 also introduces some extra periods of English language teaching in primary school, from 7 periods (Level 1) and 8 periods (Level 2) to 10 teaching periods in a week; each period takes about 30 minutes per lesson). The assumption of the additional time period is that the more time the teachers spend with the pupils, the better they will perform in the English language. The class size, the physical condition of the classrooms and the number of lessons and classes to be taught could be an extra workload for some teachers and may limit the extent to which they can work effectively with SBA in this study.

The Malaysian SBA encourages the teachers to regularly give homework and worksheets. In the Malaysian primary school classroom the practice of giving homework and worksheets is quite common. The teachers are used to giving out tasks at the end of their teaching and learning in order to determine whether the lesson they have taught was successful and was clearly understood by the learners.

However, the consistent daily recording of students' individual progress and their performance in given tasks is not a usual practice for teachers in the English language classroom. Nor does the usual practice include providing useful and constructive feedback to the learners. The most important thing for both teachers and students after each successful task is assessed is the number of correct answers provided by the learners. For the teachers, this simply shows that another lesson has been successfully taught and learned, and they can proceed to another level, unit or topic of a particular lesson.

In terms of assessment, Malaysian primary school teachers and students are used to doing paper and pen tests. This means that an assessment is officially conducted when it involves filling out and answering questions on a piece of paper. Therefore, making observations and preparing checklists or using other instruments to monitor a learner's progress while he/she accomplishes a certain task (e.g. classroom presentation, choral reading or reading individually, doing group work, pair working, making puppets) has not been a common practice in the teachers' understanding of assessment.

Malaysian English language teachers are also used to conducting a summative assessment two or three times a year, checking and recording it as a one-off report for the students and parents and for a record for the schools (in the form of letter grades). Teachers will only conduct formative assessments (in the form of monthly tests as understood by them) if there is a necessity to do so, and these are usually used for drilling and preparing the students for standardised examination. Whether dealing with formative or summative assessments, the teachers consider them both basically as means used to measure the ability and competence of the students in answering questions and to prepare individual learners for national standardised examinations. The factors above could give some information that SBA might face have some complications and challenges in its implementation in the Malaysian primary school classroom. And as with any other educational reform, the introduction of SBA into the Malaysian primary schools did not occur without objections. The next section explains these in further detail.

1.7 Opposition to SBA in Malaysia

When SBA was initially introduced, teachers began expressing their concerns about the system. The key issues reported were the increased in the teachers' clerical duties and the recording and storing of the students' learning progress. Teachers tried raising their voices through various channels and often highlighted their concerns in local media. One such media outlet was a social network page with the title 'We want to terminate SBA' (as translated into English). Much of the disappointment about the SBA

was expressed through the page. This was followed by a protest organised by an organisation called Suara Guru Masyarakat Malaysia (SGMM) or The Teachers' Voice of Malaysia. The protest was backed by Malaysian NGOs but was highly criticised by National Union of the Teaching Profession, who claimed that SGMM was an illegal organisation and that holding the protest could damage the teaching profession. The protest was a surprising development, because as discussed previously, open defiance is not usually an option in the Malaysian context.

Parents also showed concern about SBA and protested through the 'Parent Action Group For Education' (acronym PAGE is an educational lobbyist that serves as a channel between concerned parents, the Ministry of Education and other educational stakeholders) in 2014. According to the PAGE association in a news article published in the Malaymail Online in February 20, 2014 stated that although SBA is a good plan, it had proven to be deficient to replace examination. PAGE identified the following points with the move to SBA:

- The plan for SBA was not laid out and modelled on an already working system elsewhere in the world and piloted to scale;
- The SBA system is a total system overhaul compared to all the other numerous changes that we have had so far. Yet, it is done rather hurriedly and without proper supervision;
- Parents are sceptical of such a system due to unanswered questions such as, how is SBA going to maintain a consistent marking system across the board? What acceptable measures are taken to guard against bias? What is the benchmark needed for admittance into residential schools or other non national schools? No teachers or the

examination syndicate members have managed to answer these questions convincingly for them;

- SBA requires that teachers to evaluate each student individually (in relation to their own progress rather than by comparison to other learners). This can cause inconsistent marking. Not only are teachers not used to such a marking scheme, but teacher evaluation is subjective and varies among different teachers and schools.
- In addition, SBA evaluation comes with a huge baggage of administrative and clerical chores in the method of reporting students' progress. According to PAGE the method of reporting is also questionable. This could be because parents are not used with the type of result that the SBA system generated as they did not get clear information about the scoring of SBA.
- PAGE agrees that teachers should not be overwhelmed with administrative tasks. They contended that the teachers should be focused on one thing, which is teaching their children and any other chores that take away the teachers' classroom and lesson preparation time will not benefit their children.

Following the protest, there was no more front-page news concerning SBA. This could mean that the teachers and parents had accepted SBA as a new form of assessment, or it could mean that they are still having difficulties but are keeping them quiet.

My personal experiences with SBA in the primary school were also not without troubling issues. First, my colleague and I did not understand what SBA meant in practice. In particular, our knowledge as a teacher lacked the concept of formative assessment (Black and Wiliam, 2003) as a method of assessment. Second, teachers have a long history of teaching towards

examinations (see, Section 1.2.2 and Section 1.5). Although we had school meetings to discuss about this reform, the discussions were mainly concerns about documenting SBA results and making sure that teachers are conducting SBA in the classroom (if the teachers produce scores for SBA it is considered done and we have something to show to the officers who visits the school). Sometimes, we felt that SBA was being done simply to provide some evidence to the officers that SBA is being implemented and without proper understanding of how the scores were going to be used. These issues raised a question in my mind regarding whether SBA was being implemented as anticipated by the new curriculum or whether teachers had resolved to continue teaching in the traditional way and were finding some other way of dealing with the demands of SBA. Specifically, were the concepts and principles of formative assessment being articulated as intended in Black and Wiliam's (2003) descriptions of formative assessment?

1.8 Significance of the study

Thus far, I have presented some evidence for why Malaysian primary school language teachers may be struggling with the implementation of SBA, and this provides part of the rationale for looking at SBA from teachers' perspectives. As Burn (2010) asserts, teachers usually want to be effective and provide quality learning experiences for their students. However, teachers might also implement SBA without having a clear understanding of what they are actually meant to do. My intention is therefore to investigate what teachers do and their reasons for so doing, through exploring the

beliefs and practices of a small group of teachers in Eastern Malaysia. Such an investigation may help increase our understanding of how educational change is introduced and interpreted at a classroom level in primary schools in a Southeast Asian context and may suggest some ways for curriculum developers to support primary school teachers when they are faced with education reforms in Malaysia and in other places which share the same context.

SBA is an example of the kind of major educational reform which education ministries are constantly introducing into systems around the world. As we will see, a large volume of research literature has emerged which discusses this topic, analyses the factors which promote change and this study will add to this body of literature.

1.9 Outline of the thesis

In this first chapter, I presented the contextual background of the study, highlighting the characteristics of English language teaching and assessment in Malaysia, the primary school English curriculum and the concept of SBA in the Malaysian education system. In the second chapter, highlights the historical emergence of SBA as a widespread form of educational assessment, and review empirical studies of its processes and effects, educational changes and the study of teachers' beliefs and practices is put forward in the second chapter. In Chapter 3, the methodological framework of the study is delineated, followed by an analysis of each teacher's case in Chapter 4 and a cross analysis of these cases in Chapter

5. A discussion of the research findings is articulated and compared with other relevant research findings in Chapter 6. Finally, this thesis ends with a conclusion and recommendations for further research in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Earlier in this chapter discussed how the Malaysian education system has emphasised teaching to the test because of high-stakes national examinations at all levels of schooling in primary, secondary and tertiary education; SBA is meant to lessen these tensions. The enforcement of SBA was also to enhance the communicative skills component of the English language curriculum as a contribution towards producing world-class human capital under the Malaysian GTP programme through the primary school education. SBA is believed to be able to equip individuals with the skills needed in the twenty-first century (i.e. creativity, high thinking skills, English language communicative skills etc.) as well as to sustain and retain global competitiveness. I also discussed in Chapter 1 how SBA is defined in Malaysia. In this section, I will discuss the historical context of SBA, the underlying principles of formative assessment, its benefit and the issues that it encounters specifically issues related to understanding what formative assessment is and about giving feedback.

This chapter first delineates the historical context of SBA, the underlying principles of formative assessments, its benefits as well as the issues which SBA encounters both in theory and in practice. It will also explore the reasons for the shift from centralised assessment to a more school based assessment approach as well as the challenges that the teachers

encountered in dealing with this type of assessment as discussed in many existing studies (i.e. Hounsell, 1997; Wotjas; 2001; Sardereh and Saad, 2012; Fook and Sidhu, 2013; Barley; 2013).

Secondly, the concept of educational change and reform is considered, and strategies for introducing educational change are discussed. It is important to understand the nature of educational change or reform, because this will give insight into how the curriculum (e.g. English language curriculum) is introduced into the education system (the school). Following this, the chapter explores research into the connections between teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to educational change. This section is important because teachers may be comfortable with the teaching strategy they have previously employed and often may see no reason why they should change from what they normally do despite the fact that their new curriculum reform promotes changes in teaching practices. It also deals with the factors which may influence teachers' interpretations and implementation of such educational change. This review of the literature will be used to critique the way SBA was introduced in Malaysia. This chapter also deals with the unintended outcomes of educational change on teaching practices. The review of this section is used to understand the phenomena surrounding teachers' teaching practices with the introduction of SBA.

2.2 The historical context of SBA

The roots of SBA lie in the Australian government attempt to cater for a large number of students enrolled in elementary and secondary education in

Australia in the 1940s to the 1960s. They felt (the Australian government) that there was a need to develop other kinds of tests for lower level education instead of just relying on their public examinations. They thought that by choosing other type of assessment that give the school more responsibilities of administering the test will enable to cater the large number of students enrolment in public schools. Since then, public examinations were replaced with assessment conducted and administered at school level. During this era, SBA function more as a summative assessment that was conducted at the end of a learning unit or topic.

Although SBA was first introduced to focus more on summative evaluation, meaning that it was generally designed and intended to serve the purpose of examinations, teachers were given considerable freedom with respect to curriculum and assessment (Mercurio, 2008). Mercurio (2008) stated that the introduction and shift to SBA in the positioning of assessment under the administration of teachers in Australia had also shown some cultural shifts. New Zealand, for instance, has been changing its overall qualification system aiming towards both certifying performance in a broad range of domains and helping students learn more (Brown, 2011, p. 2).

Mercurio also contended that the increased focus on student learning had presented a cultural shift, in the previous 20 years, in terms of how young learners were identified, moving from labelling them as 'candidates', 'pupils' and 'students' to referring to them as 'learners' or simply as 'young people'. He added that the view of students as learners or just young people is tied to 'what we understand as learning, to where learning takes place, to the role

of teachers in the learning process, and in conducting assessments in the service of learning and how we view the purpose of assessment' (p. 10). There is also a shift from cognitivist views of learning to more sociocultural perspectives on learning, which draws attention:

to what learners with minds and bodies, home and peer cultures and languages, previous learning experiences, interests and values — bring to their learning environments and how that shapes their interactions with those learning environments. (Haertel et al., 2008, p. 8)

There has also been an expansion of curriculum purposes. The boundaries of what is taught and assessed are expanding in subject-specific, disciplinary and interdisciplinary ways. There is a shift from 'insulation to connectivity between disciplines and subjects, and between knowledge and its application' (Young, 2008, p. 33). The expansion of curriculum purposes also includes paying attention to cross-curricula skills, referred to in Malaysia as 'educational emphases' (i.e. thinking skills, mastery learning, multi intelligence, information and technology skills, learning how to learn skills).

Over the past 40 years, many countries have developed and introduced some degree of SBA into their education systems (e.g. Oman known as continuous assessment, Assessment for learning in England, Task Based Learning in New Zealand) primarily blending school assessment with external examination (i.e. in Hong Kong, the Caribbean). The shift has made its way into Asia and specifically, now, into Malaysia. As stated earlier that the introduction to SBA was mostly to blend formative and summative assessment. However, Christodoulou (2016) argues that over the last thirty years, most attempts to create an integrated formative and summative

assessment had not met with great success mainly because formative and summative inferences require different types of assessment (p. 74). The Malaysian SBA system is also attempting to combine formative and summative assessment as part of its SBA (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 3). This study will observe how the teachers in this study integrate formative assessment and summative assessment and what kind of issues they encounter with the integration of these two assessments under the Malaysian SBA system.

Although the introduction of the Malaysian SBA emphasized both formative and summative assessment to be conducted as stated earlier (also in Chapter 1) and that formative assessment should be part of the teachers' teaching and learning routine, the underlying principles of formative assessment was not clearly stated as far as I had read. In addition, the term SBA is usually defined and conceived as assessment for learning or formative assessment. Both are usually used extensively and interchangeably to describe an assessment that is conducted in the classroom by the teacher during teaching and learning to accelerate pupils' learning as discussed in the following section. In this study, I will also use both terms interchangeably. The following subsection discusses the underlying principles of formative assessment as well as its importance as presented and debated in many existing studies.

2.2.1 The principles of formative assessment

Formative assessment is rooted in Bloom et al.'s concept of mastery learning, 'an instructional approach that espouses the use of assessment to gauge students' progress towards mastering a learning goal' (Bloom et al., 1971; cited in Trumbull and Lash, 2013, p. 2). However, formative assessment received little attention until Black and Wiliam published *Inside the Black Box: Assessment and Classroom Learning* in 1988. After reviewing 160 journals about formative assessment from several countries, they concluded that formative assessment clearly means to improve students' achievement and related to 'assessment and classroom learning' (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p.1). Formative assessment is also equated to 'any assessment that is designed and practiced to serve the purpose of promoting pupils' learning' (Black et al., 2004, p. 10). Black and Wiliam (1998a) also state that formative assessment does not have a tightly defined and widely accepted meaning. They refer to formative assessment as encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers and/or by their students which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged (p. 7).

Since then, formative assessment has gained considerable attention among researchers. For example, Brookhart (2010) refers to formative assessment as the ongoing process students and teachers engage in when they 1) focus on the learning goal, 2) take stock of where the current work is in relation to the goal and 3) take action to move closer to the goal. She states that the best formative assessment is when both students and teachers are engaged

or involved 'in a recursive process'. It is a process where the teacher models the process for the student:

For example, the teacher shares the aspects of a good descriptive paragraph and tells students how their work compares to the ideal. Gradually, students internalize the learning goals and become able to see the target themselves. They begin to be able to decide how close they are to it (p. 3).

Suskie (2009, p. 4), on the other hand, describes formative assessment as a four-step cycle, as illustrated in the figure 5 below:

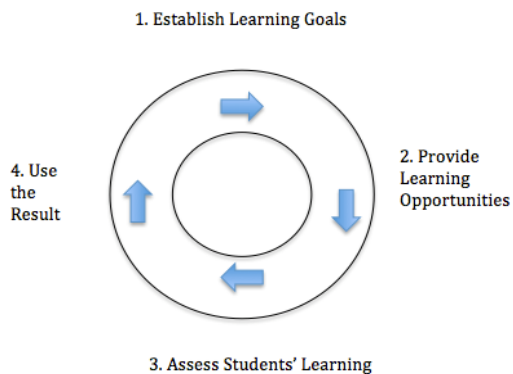


Figure 5: Teaching, learning and assessment as a continuous four-step cycle process (Suskie, 2009, p. 4)

According to Suskie, in formative assessment, both the teacher and the student set a learning target and then discuss how to get to that learning objective. Thus, both the teacher and the learner find the best teaching and learning strategy to help achieve their stated goal. From then onwards, teachers assess learners when both feel that they are ready to be assessed. The results of the assessment are then used to decide what needs to be focused on further and to make improvements, specifically in the students' learning as well as in the teachers' teaching.

Assessment for learning is also not just not about certifying learning, it also aims to improve learning. As such, assessment for learning strategies help teachers fulfil other components of learning such as thinking skills and personal abilities, lifelong learning and mutual understanding (Bennet, 2011; Black and Wiliam, 1998ab). This means that assessment for learning requires teachers and learners to use assessment to improve instruction and learning. It is about assessing learners' progress, providing them with feedback and deciding on the next step in the teaching and learning process. As Jones (2005, p. 5) states, it involves 'informing learners of their progress to empower them to take necessary actions to improve their performance'; Jones also contends that 'the principal characteristic of assessment for learning is effective feedback provided by teachers to learners on their progress' (p. 1) and that:

Assessment for learning strategies should be implemented in such a way that quality feedback provided to learners based on, for example, an interim assessment decision, will help to challenge the more able learner to reach new levels of achievement and, in doing so, reach their full potential. The individuality of feedback, by its very nature, has the facility to support weaker learners and challenge more able learners (p. 1).

Similarly, McCallum (2012, p. 1) states that 'in formative assessment both the teacher and the pupils make judgements of the pupil's work and learning strategies against learning objectives'. She adds that both can give feedback about what is successful, and the teacher takes the lead (as a more knowledgeable other) in deciding what is needed to close the gap. It is also a process in which teachers define and share the learning intention and success criteria with the students (Sardereh and Saad, 2012; Jones, 2005)

and engage learners in learning and motivating them to learn (Crespo, 2002; Zental and Morris, 2010). Gipps (1994) likened assessment for learning to an evaluation which informs the learning and teaching process, thus improving learning.

The pupils also learn about the 'scaffolding' they will receive in order to achieve the learning intentions, which means learners play an active role in monitoring their own progress. They constantly collaborate with their teacher to monitor their current level of achievement in relation to the learning intentions. As such, during the learning process, students have a key role in assessment and learning, actively communicating their learning evidence to their teachers, other students and parents.

Trumbull and Lash contend the most crucial feature of formative assessment is 'that evidence is evoked, interpreted in terms of learning needs, and used to make adjustments [to instruction] to better meet those learning needs' (William, 2006, p. 3). Therefore, any instructional activity which allows teachers to uncover the way students think about what is being taught and which can be used to promote improvements in students' learning can serve a formative purpose (p. 3).

Many studies have called feedback the 'linchpin' which links the components of the formative assessment process (Brookhart et al., 2010, p. 41). As such, formative assessment has also been a link to scaffolding (Shepard, 2005; Shute 2007) and has been referred to as 'scaffolded feedback' (Bransford et al., 2000). Shepard explains that scaffolding constitutes 'supports that

teachers provide to the learner during problem solving—in the form of reminders, hints, and encouragement—to ensure successful completion of a task' (p. 66). One of the main important features of scaffolding is defined as 'controlling those elements that are beyond the learners' capacity' (Wood et al., 1976, p. 70).

Shepard also associates formative assessment with scaffolding with Vygotsky's (1978) 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). This zone is the space between:

the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (p. 86)

According to Vygotsky's (1978) cultural theory of development, any aspect of a child's cognitive development occurs twice, first on the social plane in interaction with others and then on the psychological or internal plane. This also means that any language and logical structures children use in their thinking they first learned through social interactions. Shepard (2005) states that learning in the zone of proximal development is a joint activity in which the adult (in this case, the teacher) simultaneously keeps an eye on the goal of fully proficient performance and on what the learner, with assistance, is currently able to do. Scaffolding is a strategy which teachers can use to move learning forward towards that goal, using the learners zone of proximal development. Shepard (2005) argues that feedback is a form of scaffolding.

Black and Wiliam also stated that the feedback provided should be appropriate (and shaped according to the pupil's level of learning and what they are capable of doing with assistance i.e. Vygotsky's theory the pupil's ZPD). Thus, in formative assessment the feedback should be in a form of scaffolding (i.e. hints, prompts, the most appropriate or suitable teaching-learning support the teacher and the pupil feel most comfortable with) according to the pupil ZPD.

Feedback is 'information provided by an agent (e.g. teacher, peer, parent, the assessment itself) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding' (Hattie and Timperley, 2007, p. 81). It is considered the most powerful single influence on assisting learner's progress in learning and teacher's teaching in formative assessment (Hattie, 1987) provided that the:

Feedback to any pupil should be about the particular qualities of his or her work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve, and should avoid comparisons with other pupils (Black and Wiliam, 2001, p. 6).

This means that formative assessment could improve particular learning for a particular learner (lower achievers) by concentrating on their weaknesses and providing them with the right advice (the feedback given) without judging their abilities and comparing their achievements with others (those higher achievers) (Black and Wiliam, 2001).

Similarly, the authors of *How People Learn* (Bransford et al., 2000) suggest to use scaffolding that is more of a goal-directed learning (or as mentioned earlier, scaffolded feedback) which 1) motivates the learner's interest related to the task, 2) simplifies the task to make it more manageable and

achievable, 3) provides some direction to help the learner focus on achieving the goal, 4) clearly indicates the differences between the learner's work and the standard or desired solution, 5) reduces frustration and risk and 6) models and clearly defines the expectations (goals) of the activity to be performed. In conventional views, this process is known as facilitative feedback (e.g. giving guidance and cues), and it is also considered more effective than directive feedback (e.g. giving corrective information). However, Shute (2007) argues that it is not always the case that facilitative feedback is more effective than directive feedback, because directive feedback is more useful to learners when they are just learning a new topic or content area (e.g. Knoblauch and Brannon, 1981; Moreno, 2004). The reason for this is that scaffolding relates to the explicit support of learners during the learning process, and in educational settings, this support may include models, cues, prompts, hints and partial solutions as well as direct instruction (Hartman, 2002). It may also include comments about the particular qualities of the pupils' work, with advice on what they can do to improve (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p. 9). In other words, the type of guidance that is provided and appropriately given to the pupil according to their learning needs.

Scaffolding will also be gradually removed once learners gain their 'cognitive footing' (Shute, 2007, p.14). This means that directive feedback is useful in the early stage of learning, and facilitative feedback is more useful at later stages, when the learner develops more sophisticated cognitive systems where the system of knowledge itself becomes part of the scaffold for new

learning (Vygotsky, 1987). In the context of the Malaysian SBA, they could also mean that directive feedback is most useful for Level One pupils (Years 1, 2 and 3), whereas facilitative feedback is more useful for Level Two pupils (Years 4, 5 and 6). This study also observes if the Malaysian primary school English language teachers in this study used either directive or facilitative feedback in their SBA practices and the reasons of their choice.

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006, p. 205) stated that good feedback practice is anything which might strengthen students' capacity to self-regulate their performance. Self-regulation means the student has internalised an idea of what good performance is, is able to compare his or her own work with that standard and knows what needs to be done to meet the standard (Sadler, 1989, cited in Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, p. 6). Thus, independent learning requires self-regulation. The Oxford Learning Institute (2016) also explains that self-regulation is 'the goal to develop an independent learning' (p. 2) and further stated that it is the connection between students' understanding of the assessment criteria (internalising what good performance looks like) and feedback. Other studies have also underlined the fact that feedback is essential in assessment for learning as summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: The usefulness of feedback

Feedback is useful...	As summarized by
When students receive 'information feedback about a task and how to do it more effectively', and it is clearly related to the learning goals (p. 84) and when it addresses achievable goals and does not carry 'high threats to self-esteem' (p.86).	Hattie and Timperley (2007)
When it is framed in terms of the impact of the writing on the reader. This can also enhance self-regulation skills, because it enables students to gradually move away from monologue to conceptualise a reader and direct their writing to him or her.	Nicol (2008), citing Lunsford (1997)
When all the protagonists are actively involved in the process.	Spiller (2009)
When teachers do not isolate feedback from the teaching and learning process and do not consider feedback to be a primarily teacher-owned endeavour.	Taras (2003)
When it helps students improve their work. Thus, the most important characteristic of feedback is that students understand it and use it.	Squires (2013, p. 2)

This means learners also play an active role in monitoring their own progress. They constantly collaborate with their teacher to monitor their current level of achievement in relation to the learning intentions. As such, during the learning process, students have a key role in assessment and learning, actively communicating their learning evidence to their teachers, other students and parents.

The Malaysian SBA states very little about scaffolding or its connection with formative assessment but the Malaysian primary school standard document and assessment repeatedly uses the phrase 'with guidance' throughout its learning and assessment activities, although there are minimal descriptions of what ' guidance' means in particular, (see Figure 3 and Appendix B for sample of the KSSR document). However, based on the discussion on the literature above scaffolding is an important element in formative assessment. This study therefore looks at teachers' practices to determine whether, since the enforcement of SBA, teachers had used any form of scaffolding during their teaching-learning and assessment activities and the kind of feedback or scaffolding provided to the primary school pupils.

The following discussion is related to the issues about interpreting what formative assessment is (e.g. teachers may think giving test every week is formative assessment) and challenges that can be encountered about feedback in formative assessment.

2.2.2 Misconceptions about formative assessment and the challenges related to giving feedback

Christodoulou (2014) argues that in some contexts formative assessment is introduced without considering the importance of providing clear feedback to students on their learning progress. She stated the importance of guiding students in their learning because according to her 'new information without proper guidance does not lead to effective learning but instead leads to confusion, frustration and misconceptions' (p. 39). Black (2004) states that

teachers often consider that giving a test every week and telling the students their achievements to be formative assessment. This demonstrates the misinterpretation in which any ongoing or frequent assessment (e.g. oral presentations, portfolios etc.) is defined as formative (Heritage, 2010). Heritage also found that some teachers tend to regard formative assessment as a particular kind of measurement instrument.

In England for instance formative assessment was perceived well by teachers, educationists and the government. Every school and teachers in its country has implemented it, well supported government training, since the concept was introduced by Black and Wiliam in 1998. However, its implementation process has not run as expected. Even though teachers in the country (in England) had followed Wiliam and Black's (1998) advice to replace grades with comments, they still tend to treat assessment for learning as high-stakes. This is because in its Ofsted system schools are not only judged by how well their pupils perform in their terminal exams (SATs and GCSEs) but also their performance from the most recent teacher assessments (Christodoulou, 2016).

Therefore, there is clearly a great deal of pressure on these sets of data. Schools might want to set up internal assessment systems that aim to diagnose weakness, but the fact that the data in the systems will be used by Ofsted to judge a school will make that much less likely (Christodoulou, 2016, p. 22).

One possible reason identified was that the word 'assessment' could have been misunderstood; 'when government get their hands on anything involving the word 'assessment', they want it to be about high-stakes

monitoring and tracking, not low-stakes diagnostics' (Christodoulou, 2016, p. 21). As Christodoulou elaborates;

William has said he wished he had called AfL 'responsive teaching', rather than using the word assessment. He has also said that, "The problem is that the government told schools that it was all about monitoring pupils' progress; it wasn't about pupils becoming owners of their own learning. AfL is not just about teachers being responsive; it is about pupils responding to information about their progress".

The Malaysian SBA document also stated extensively that SBA is an assessment that is conducted to monitor its pupils' growth, progress and provide constructive feedback, not about pupils becoming owners of their own learning, as far as I could see from my own reading. This could influence how the Malaysian teachers understand and use the term 'formative assessment' in this study.

Although feedback is an important element in formative assessment, Black and William also warn against the challenges which may be faced with feedback. The challenge for a teacher is to gain insight into the students' way of thinking about the subject matter at hand and to frame feedback which helps them move towards specific learning goals. Research has demonstrated some of the challenges associated with feedback. For example, Gibbs and Simpson (2004) claim that the quantity of feedback offered to students in UK higher education has declined due to large class sizes, although they have no evidence for this claim.

In a study specifically about feedback, Hounsell (1987) found that the feedback students received from their lecturers was either not read or was

thrown away. These actions were closely associated with the grades accompanying the feedback; if the grades were low, it was unlikely that students would read the comments provided (Wotjas, 1998). Therefore, when the emphasis is on grades or marks, this might indicate a judgement only about the individual level of achievement, and it might decrease students' self-efficacy (Wotjas, 1998). Thus, it is suggested that formative assessment feedback should be descriptive in nature. In another study, Maclellen (2001) found that higher education students claimed feedback never helped them understand things, and feedback did not prompt discussion.

However, in a primary school context, Sardereh and Saad (2012) discovered that the school students acknowledged the receipt of formative or descriptive feedback from their teachers. These students also claimed to like receiving feedback on their work. Nevertheless, they reported that they did not know how to use the feedback given by their teachers. Duncan (2007) stated that it is possible that students may not pay attention to feedback. This might be because according to Spiller (2009) the student might not make sense of the feedback given to them or they do not understand the purpose of the feedback process.

Sadler (1989) states that in order for feedback to be effective, students should have a complete understanding of learning targets and success criteria, and they also need to understand where they are, relative to the targets and criteria, and how they can close the gap. This condition requires the students to actively engage with feedback:

Students should be trained in how to interpret feedback, how to make connections between the feedback and the characteristics of the work they produce and how they can improve their work in the future. It cannot simply be assumed that when students are 'given feedback' they will know what to do with it (p. 4).

In other words, formative or descriptive feedback should provide students with information on how they can improve their learning. Spiller (2009) also suggests that careful 'preparation beforehand can help to prime the students about the nature of feedback and its role in the learning process' (p. 4).

However, Fook and Sidhu (2013) noted that Malaysian secondary teachers were aware that classroom assessment was to be an ongoing process and felt that learning was more meaningful when a student could obtain immediate feedback. However, some teachers said that time constraints, the rush to complete the syllabus, a heavy teaching load and administrative duties hindered them from using SBA results to enhance student learning. Similarly, Barley (2013) found that despite teachers' positive views of the Hong Kong SBA, an overwhelming workload caused them to make limited use of feedback. So the challenges of implementing SBA hindered the teachers from providing useful and meaningful feedback. It is possible the teachers in this study will face similar difficulties (i.e. student not reading feedback provided or having trouble understanding the feedback given to them, time constraints etc.) as discussed and described in the studies of literature above.

How teachers understand and implement a new educational policy will obviously depend on how it is introduced into the system. The following is a

discussion on educational reform, its concept and strategies used for introducing educational change. As stated earlier that it is important to understand educational change or reform, because understanding a curriculum change will give some insight into how the curriculum is introduced into the education system. The following subsections will also discuss the reasons why teachers perceive and interpret such changes in the way they do.

2.3 The concept of educational change or reform

Educational change involves introducing something new into the existing education system. Educational reform can occur at a school level, when head teachers introduce a new form of teaching material (small-scale reform), or it can occur at a national level, when the initiative is directed by top management (large-scale reform) (Lo, 2005). The Malaysian SBA, having been initiated at the national level, is a large-scale educational reform.

Wedell (2009) stated that educational reform may include changes in the content of the curriculum, an introduction to a new method or a change in the format of assessment. He referred to change as alterations or adjustments to the process or content of education, believing that similar issues influence the outcomes of educational innovation, change or reform. This study focuses on the change of assessment practices (with the teachers in this study) and specifically on the enforcement of primary school

SBA in Malaysia. I will use the words 'change' and 'reform' interchangeably in this study.

According to Fullan (2007) there are three components at stake in any new reform curriculum. This includes a) the possible use of new or revised materials; b) the possible use of new teaching approaches and; c) the possible alteration of beliefs. For example, in the Malaysian SBA teachers are expected to use a number of assessment or evaluation, including classroom observations, oral presentations, checklists, tests, quizzes, homework, creative work and writing. Teachers are encouraged to give students feedback on their work regarding whether they are meeting the expected band or standard. Teachers also need to explain or discuss the best way to improve performance to the students' desired levels (see, Section 1.4.1 on what the Malaysian primary teachers are to do with the SBA).

The reasons why educational reform is introduced into the education systems are multiple. The following section is about what drives the need for educational change and about what factors influence the process of change.

2.3.1 The need for educational change

Research has emphasised that the rapid global expansion of the economy has caused governments around the world to make changes in their education system to fit the needs of the workforce, both abroad and local (e.g. Taylor et al., 1997; Barone and Hagner, 2001). Accordingly, they

believed that learners should be provided and equipped with twenty-first century knowledge and skills through education and in line with economic trends (e.g. the rapid expansion of information and technology) (Bruniges, 2005; Kinuthia, 2009; Zhu, 2010). Christodoulou (2014) has also stated that people believe that the twenty-first century should change everything and thus it is affecting education policy and classroom practices. She argues that this is a myth and that it tends to persuade people that we cannot teach our pupils the way we always have done, and instead learning should involve not the acquisition of knowledge but problem solving activities, critical thinking, creativity and interpersonal communication skills (e.g. in Malaysia its KSSR curriculum educational emphases suggest teaching, learning and assessment should incorporate elements such as thinking skills, mastery learning, multi intelligence, information and technology skills, learning how to learn skills). Our education systems, so the argument goes, should be driven by skills and be less about memorizing what is to be tested (activities that involve drilling etc.). The introduction of the Malaysian SBA as stated in Chapter 1 is also to change a teaching methodology that focuses heavily on memorization for tests, and puts more emphasis on teaching the spoken component of the English language.

House, the author of *Economic change, educational policy formation and the role of the state* (2000, pp. 14-17), states that three things play an influential role in policymakers introducing changes into their education systems:

1. *The role of the economy.* Some leaders view education as the key to a stronger economic future, thus giving the education system a more responsible role in stimulating improvements by emphasising certain

skills and knowledge (e.g. computer skills, English language communicative skills). As House further explains, 'no government in liberal democracies can long survive without economic expansion, whether the country is run by conservatives, social democrats or socialists (or apparently communists either). This concern for productivity is manifested in a drive for greater efficiency and has special implications for education' (p. 14). Globalization for instance has been matched by the growing importance of English language (as a lingua-franca) and its importance in various fields such as science, media and tourism (Yook, 2010). The function of English as a tool for global communication has also been intensifying over the recent years (Thompson, 2003). Yook (2010) further stated that in response to the global demand and economic changes as well as the importance of English, the demand for English language education have increased worldwide especially in countries where English is adopted as a foreign (e.g. South Korea) or where English language is seen to deteriorating (e.g. Malaysia, see, Section 1.2.3). Therefore, many countries around the world have reformed their English language education policies particularly emphasising the teaching of its (English) communicative skills. The Malaysian SBA is one of an educational reform that aims to improve their learners' English language communicative skills so they can one day participate fully in the global economy.

2. *The role of culture and history.* House argues that culture and history may also contribute to educational change. In China for instance, the strong influence of Confucian teaching 'to work hard and do well' and the belief that examinations can be trusted to secure job placements and to further education results in families and students spending hours after school with private tutors (Kennedy, 2013). The China SBA was introduced into the education system to lessen the heavy reliance on teaching to the test and to make teaching more relaxed and helped students enjoy learning (Sargeant, 2007). This is meant to

encourage teachers to view assessment not only as an examination and test but as part of the learning process (Curriculum Development Council Hong Kong, 2001, cited in Kennedy, 2013, p. 3). However, the deep root of Confucian teaching in Chinese society has resulted in teachers treating SBA just like any other examination or test (Yu, 2010). As discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2.2), the Malaysian education system has emphasised examination which led to teaching activities that is limited to memorisation and drilling. This could be the direct influence of the Chinese culture - the Chinese were brought to Malaysia as labourers and later became citizens; now Malays feels they should compete with the Chinese hardworking culture, see Section 1.2.3). This also could be the reason the teachers in this study view examinations as important and they might be using teaching and assessment strategies that they are used to in preparing students for an assessment activity (e.g. drilling, memorisation and repetition as discussed in the following point).

3. *The role of educational practices* (everyday teaching and learning patterns of teachers and students). This is another influence which leads the government to make changes in the education system, as explained by House. For example, the practice of teachers 'teaching to the test', in which teachers employ test preparation practices for standardised tests, is often not in the best interests of the children (Volante, 2004). These activities may include relentless drilling on test content, eliminating important curricular content not covered by the test and providing interminably long practice sessions which incorporate actual items from these high-stakes standardised tests (Popham, 2000).

Associating assessment with memorisation was seen in a study conducted by Au and Entwistle (1999), in which it was discovered that Chinese students were prone to using rote memorisation. The same tendency was identified in studies done by Biggs (1996), Samuelowicz (1987) and Kember and Gow (1996) in China. These

researchers found that despite Chinese students being passive and less interactive in the classroom, their levels of achievement were relatively high in examinations at Western universities. According to Marton et al. (1997), the combination (memorisation with attempts to understand) used to prepare for examinations is seen by Chinese students as normal, because 'having an understanding of something implies memory, just as (meaningful) memory implies understanding' (p. 32).

Research has emphasised that while students' scores will rise when teachers teach closely to a test, learning often does not change (Shepard, 2000; Smith and Fey, 2000). This knowledge (the effects of teaching to the test) has transformed the view of teaching and learning in most parts of the world. As discussed above (Point 2) the influence of Chinese culture in the Malaysian education system has led to a restricted range of teaching activities (such as the above description, point 3). SBA is meant to provide teachers with different kind of approaches for assessment. For example, in the SBA some activities for assessment were suggested as follow (e.g. role play, group work, making puppets, creative writing).

According to Christodoulou (2014) that activities such as these are suggested as an alternative to dull rote learning. However, she provided a number of cases, including her own experiences as suggested in the England's curriculum, which suggest that these are not always productive and beneficial. When she assigned her pupils to do a piece of creative writing about what it was like to be a footballer in the nineteenth century (some persuasive writing arguing for or against professionalism), she realized that it was not possible for her pupils to do so with regards to how little they know and how little she was allowed to tell about the assignment. Her pupils ended up making a portfolio of work from their lessons. An example of the item in the portfolio was a design for a football club's crest and a piece of work evaluating its meaning. This lesson taught her that not only the pupils were not learning to think about the history of football

but they had also spent their entire lessons and time thinking about how to draw a crest shape and colouring in between the lines. By contrast Christodoulou argues that memorization, repetition, drilling and other activities that are often now considered dull rote learning activities are useful and have important effects on pupils' long-term memory. She argues that these activities (memorizing, drilling and repetition) do not always have to be dull when used by the teacher with the appropriate strategy. To her, it is important for both present and future learning and for pupils to be able to survive, adapt and innovate in the world that is rapidly changing. Malaysian primary school teachers would actually agree with her about the value of these traditional activities, having never been exposed to the liberal educational values which have influenced late 20th century educators in the west.

The teachers in this study might also have trouble in their judgment of choosing the method and activity to use in their teaching. This is because as stated earlier in Section 2.2.3, assessment is usually interpreted as giving frequent tests to the pupil and that assessment usually leads to teaching to the test (Section 1.2.2). This study is to also observe if there is any change in the method that the teachers had used in their teaching since the introduction of the SBA and if they are using the activities as suggested in the SBA document.

Among the three elements discussed above, House states that the influence of the national economy has become the primary reason changes are introduced into most of the world's educational systems. Often, changes introduced under the influence of the economy do not take into account teachers' existing practices and result in some mismatch of practices with regard to the intended reform (House, 2000). However, in the case of the Malaysian SBA, all three elements (economy, culture and history as well as

educational practices) led to the implementation of SBA in the Malaysian primary school education system in 2011.

As mentioned earlier how teachers conceive and implement educational change depends on how the reform is introduced into the education system. The following section discusses several ways in which policymakers introduce new curriculum policies usually using the 'power-coercive' strategy and 'normative re-educative' strategy. Both of these strategies are discussed further in the following section.

2.3.2 Strategies used to inform educational change

Introducing a new curriculum should require careful planning, direction and order (Fullan, 2001). In this section I will discuss Chin and Benne's (1976, cited in Kennedy, 1987) power-coercive strategy and normative re-educative strategy in the provision of information on curriculum change and will later use this to criticise the Malaysian SBA scheme.

The power-coercive strategy is a top-down approach to the change process. According to this approach, when the change is being planned, only a few or even none of those at a lower level who would be affected by the change are consulted. Therefore, once the change has been formulated, it will simply be presented to those at the lower end of the hierarchy for implementation. The main principle of this strategy is to force people to change in ways the reform demands that they do. Given that the new curriculum *must* be implemented, how will teachers as the change agents be able to interpret the relevant

documents when they themselves do not have a clear understanding of them? Prabhu (1987) suggests that teachers may:

...take on the new routines while rejecting the perception behind them, thus making them mere routines from the beginning. Or they may dissociate perception from practice, operating with the perception in contexts in which perceptions are seen to be relevant, such as professional discussion but operating without it in the classroom. (p. 106)

Earlier in this chapter, (Section 2.2.2) I had also discussed that assessment for learning was perceived well in the England's curriculum. However, its implementation was not as expected or as visualized by William and Paul Black. The main reason as stated earlier was that the government involvement has led schools to treat the assessment as high-stakes and not as a low-stakes diagnostic tool. The government judged school from both of its external (SATs, GCSEs) results as well as the teachers' internal assessment (the assessment for learning). The teachers have to work extremely hard for both assessments which makes them unable to use the assessment for learning to diagnose pupils' weaknesses (Christodoulou, 2016).

The Malaysian SBA is another example of a top-down approach to educational reform. It was hoped that the introduction of SBA into the Malaysian education system would improve and enhance the communicative skills in the English language in primary schools, through the use of both formative and summative assessments, following the suggested activities in the SBA document. It was also hoped that SBA would lessen the tension of examinations and would help achieve the Malaysian GTP objective. This

study will observe the impact of this top-down approach to educational change on the teachers teaching practices in this study.

Another strategy used in introducing change, which Chin and Benne (1976, cited in Kennedy, 1987) identify and which has been gaining attention, is the normative re-educative strategy. This strategy assumes that the end user (teachers as implementers) recognises the need for change or, in the view of Quinn and Sonenshein (2004, p. 70), that the user is 'rationally self-interested'. Hence, the change being introduced becomes a bottom-up process rather than a top-down strategy. The assumption of this strategy is that teachers 'act and behave according to the values and norms established in given society, that accepting change sometimes necessitates changes to deep-rooted beliefs and behaviours' (Richardson and Placier, 2001, cited in Orafi, 2007, p. 25). This also means that the normative re-educative strategy view understands people as inherently social, guided by a normative culture which influences behaviours. Thus, teachers will collaborate, participate actively and be involved positively in the change. In order for change to occur, in this view, the target should not only focus on rational information processing but also on the consideration of 'habits and values, normative structures, institutionalised roles and relationships, and cognitive and perceptual orientations' (Quinn and Sonenshein, 2004, p. 70). I will discuss this further when I critique the introduction of the Malaysian SBA scheme in which the teachers' pedagogical beliefs about assessment and their pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning were not taken into consideration.

As stated earlier teachers may be comfortable with the teaching strategy they have previously employed and often may see no reason why they should change from what they normally do. For example studies on reform implementation in China have frequently found that teachers are simply continuing to teach as they did before (Dello-Iacovo, 2009; Kennedy, 2013; Yu, 2010). This is despite the fact that their new curriculum reform promotes changes in teaching practices from the traditional examination-oriented approaches of rote learning and memorisation, lectures and drills to a more student-centered approach where students have space to develop their creativity, develop and express their ideas, collaborate with each other and learn by doing and where holistic development is emphasised. Yet in contrast, teachers' practices have remained the same (rote memorisation, lectures and drills).

Therefore, a number of researchers have suggested some principles in planning and implementing educational change. Wedell (2009), for example, points out some requirements for successful reform:

- It does not depend on what is written but on how people interpret and act upon what is written.
- It is a medium- to very long-term process.
- It needs to be separated from politics.
- It can make professional (and personal) demands of people.
- It can, to begin with at least, make people feel professionally or personally confident.
- It requires the investment of a great deal of time and effort by large numbers of individuals.

- Some evidence of the positive outcomes of the new practices must be provided for people to see, so they will make an effort to try them.

Hence, Wedell (2003) also calls upon planners to provide support for teachers implementing change:

If planners introduce English language curriculum change with stated objectives whose achievements require teachers to make significant professional adjustments, it is clearly their responsibility to consider how teachers may be supported in making these. To be able to do so, planners themselves need to be clear about what adjustment the proposed change will necessarily involve. (p. 447)

He also suggests two interdependent points for planners to consider if the curriculum change involves a significant cultural shift:

- Decide what the intended change requires teachers to do and then decide on the kind of support they need, who will provide these supports and the length of time for which the supports will be needed.
- Decide what might be the implications for the other components of English language study, and then decide what kind of modifications are needed to create a balance in teaching all the other components of the curriculum. Decide when to make the changes, and decide what further supports will required in order to do it.

Research has shown that the level of teacher involvement often varies from one situation to another, depending on what the teachers' beliefs are (e.g. Prawat, 1992; Schraw and Olafson, 2002), the context they are in (e.g. Orafi, 2008; Wedell, 2009) and on training (e.g. Fullan and Miles, 1992; Spillane, 1999) concerning the change. Therefore, an investigation is needed into whether and why the introduction of SBA into the Malaysian education

system has influenced teachers' thinking and practice teaching and whether it has produced the intended effect on these.

Thus, the following section is important because as stated earlier teachers may be comfortable with the teaching practices that they currently employed and see no reasons they should change. The next section discusses in detail three main factors that may influence teachers' interpretation of educational reform and they are the teachers' pedagogical beliefs, the socio-cultural contexts and the teachers' professional development during a time of educational change.

2.4 Factors contributing to the teachers' interpretation of educational change

A number of researchers have attempted to identify the factors behind teachers' interpretations of new, reformed curricula (e.g. Raselimo and Wilmot, 2013; Lamb, 2010). This study first defines the concept of teachers' interpretation. The literature suggests that teachers' interpretations represent their ability to enact a new curriculum policy, guided or influenced by their epistemology (Blignaut, 2008; Handle and Herrington, 2003). Teachers' epistemology refers to beliefs about content, pedagogy and specific context. These may either enhance or interfere with teachers' interpretations of a new curriculum policy (Blignaut, 2008). Lamb (2010) on the other hand, considers teachers' interpretations to be how teachers make sense of a new

mandated reform curriculum. This discussion is used to define the idea of teachers' interpretation of SBA reform in this study.

It is widely acknowledged that sociocultural context or setting plays a significant role in teachers' adoption of curriculum reform (e.g. Orafi, 2008; Wedell, 2009). The clarity of the way in which the change has been delivered to teachers as implementers of the reform has also been widely recognised in the literature (e.g. Carless, 1999; Kirkgoz, 2007; Raselimo, 2013). These three factors are used as a framework, developed by Spillane and his colleagues (2002), in assisting curriculum researchers to understand how teachers interpret a reformed curriculum. Spillane et al. refer to the three factors above as individual cognition, situated cognition and policy representation.

According to Spillane et al. (2002), individual cognition involves recognising that the development of new knowledge occurs through existing structures, such as teachers' prior knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning. Situational cognition also emphasises that school contexts, such as organisational structures, the social environment and the historical context, are important factors shaping teachers' sense-making with respect to a new curriculum policy. Policy representation is concerned with the clarity of deliverance of the reform initiatives or whether the policy intentions are clearly understood by the teachers expected to use the new curriculum in their classrooms. I will use Spillane's framework in this study to understand the teachers' interpretation of the Malaysian primary school SBA. As stated earlier they are, (a) teachers' pedagogical beliefs or values; (b) sociocultural

context or settings and; (c) teachers' professional development during times of educational change.

2.4.1 Teachers' pedagogical beliefs or values

The study of teachers' beliefs emerged in the mid-1990s, and since then, there have been many reviews of research into what second language and foreign language teachers think, know and believe about language teaching (Borg, 2006). Literature about teachers' pedagogical beliefs and assessment instructions also gradually emerged at about the same time (e.g. Bleim and Davinroy, 1997). Spillane et al. (2002) and a number of other researchers suggested that teachers' pedagogical beliefs can shape what they actually do (e.g. Stipek et al., 2001; Kuzborska, 2011), because people have their own sets of ideas which help them determine how they should understand their experiences and how they should value certain educational goals (Pring, 2004). Belief is also often described as a lens through which one looks when interpreting the world (Philipp, 2007). Similarly, other studies have shown the importance of values to teaching (e.g. Clark and Peterson, 1984; Pajares, 1992).

A number of studies have also identified differences between beliefs and values. For example, Bishop et al. (2003) found beliefs to be associated with true/false dichotomies, whereas values are associated with desirable/undesirable dichotomies. To further distinguish between beliefs and values, researchers such as Rokeach (1973, cited in Philipp, 2007) viewed values as enduring beliefs, while Clarkson and Bishop (1999) viewed

values as beliefs in action. Bishop et al. (2003) contended that values influence, rather than determine, the choice of possible actions available. Bishop and his colleagues also pointed out that the similarities between beliefs and values are far greater than the differences, because as people hold incompatible values, so too, they hold beliefs which may conflict. Bishop et al. further contended that for this reason, mathematics educators usually use the terms 'beliefs' and 'values' interchangeably. Based on these discussions, in this study I will also use the terms interchangeably.

The term 'beliefs' has also been defined with respect to terms such as 'attitude and orientation' (Eisenhart et al, 1988; Richardson, 1996), 'attitude and knowledge' (Davis and Andrzejewski, 2009) or 'individual cognition' and 'cognition' (Spillane et al, 2002; Borg 2006). In English language teaching, Borg (2001) defined a belief as a proposition which is consciously held by the teacher, perceived as true by the individual and filled with motives and positive intentions which help guide his or her thinking and actions. Zheng (2009, p. 74) defined a belief as 'inclusively to embrace the complexity of teachers' mental lives underlying their practices'. On the other hand, Halstead and Pike (2006, p. 24) define values as,

principles and fundamental conviction which act as justifications for activity in the public domain and as general guide to private behaviour, they enduring beliefs about what is worthwhile, ideals for which people strive and broad standards by which particular practices are judged to be good, right, desirable or worthy of respect.

This means that a study of teachers' pedagogical beliefs or values form part of the process of understanding how teachers conceptualise and approach

their work. I will use Halstead and Pike's above definition about pedagogical values in this study.

Richardson (1996, p. 105) outlined three sources which help to shape teachers' pedagogical beliefs:

- Personal experiences, in which teachers may be influenced by what they have previously learned and observed from a particular individual and which may inspire or shape their own teaching (e.g. social encounters, teacher preparation, professional development etc.);
- Experience with schooling and formal knowledge, beliefs that teachers are influenced by their experiences as learners and the degree to which the community has agreed certain teaching or learning to be worthwhile and valid (i.e. models of teaching, classroom management and classroom environment) and;
- Enculturation, which 'involves incidental learning process individuals undergo throughout their lives assimilating the cultural elements present in their personal world' (Pajares, 1992). In other words, 'education is directed and purposeful learning, either formal or informal that has its main task in bringing behaviour in line with cultural requirements' (p. 316).

Hence, teachers' pedagogical beliefs are considered to be a great influence on their underlying practices. Kagan (1992) contended that their beliefs are also relatively stable and resistant to change. For example, Rahman (2014) examined the dissemination of the Malaysian primary school English language curriculum reform which aimed and 'focused on the development of students ability in using language appropriately, meaningfully and

effectively' (p. 169). Among her participants were teachers, district officers and a curriculum developer. Adopting a mixed method strategy of interviews and classroom observations, her study highlighted the fact that the teachers continued to believe that learning provides 'fact and information' and believed that effective teaching is where students should remember what has been taught. The reason behind her findings was that teachers had not fully understood the content of the curriculum. This indicates that if teachers do not believe in the value of the stated change and what they can bring to their teaching, the change is unlikely to take effect.

In Spillane's framework, the individual cognition element recognises that the development of new knowledge occurs through existing structures (e.g. teachers' existing knowledge and practices concerning teaching and learning). Spillane emphasised that these structures need to be supported, or little may be achieved in terms of realising change. Harvey (1999) investigated teachers' implementation of a new model of teaching science in South African primary schools and identified the fact that the teachers' commitment to change was not very strong and that they had returned to their pre-existing practices because support was not provided during the change. This suggests that teachers should be given time to conceptualise both their practices and what the stated change actually means for them.

Some suggest that teachers need to modify their beliefs to accept new teaching and learning methods (Zeng, 2005, cited in Wedell, 2009). Zhang and Liu (2014) also said that teachers need to incorporate reform ideas into their beliefs systems. However, research has shown that teachers'

pedagogical beliefs are difficult to change (e.g. Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Raths, 2001; et al., 2012; Xu, 2012; Mihaela, 2015). Fullan (2001) warned that readjusting one's beliefs is not easy, as it involves 'the core value held by individuals regarding the purpose of education' (p. 44), and suggested that to alter teachers' pedagogical beliefs, extensive support must be provided. Similarly, Nunan (2004) emphasised that since the choices teachers make about what they do in their classrooms are 'underpinned by beliefs about the nature of language, the nature of the learning process and the nature of the teaching act' (p. 6), it is important to ask teachers what they think about new educational reforms. Such information may provide a window into their beliefs and understanding concerning effective pedagogy. This new insight might then lead to strategies for conducting effective implementation. This also indicates the importance of identifying which prior pedagogical beliefs or values may challenge or have an impact on teachers' interpretations of a new curriculum policy.

A growing body of research argues that teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices should be studied within the sociocultural contexts of their work because the relationship between their beliefs and practices is both complex and context-dependent' (Mansour, 2013, p. 1). The following section discusses this.

2.4.2 Sociocultural context or settings

The sociocultural context or setting plays a significant role in teachers' adoption of curriculum reform (Wedell, 2009; Sheppard, 2000; Elliot, 1994;

Mansour, 2013). Thus, research indicates that educational beliefs and practices are not context-free or separated from the wider sociocultural contexts in which teachers are embedded (Briscoe, 1991; Rogoff, 2003; Ash, 2004; Robbins, 2005). This means that the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices cannot be examined outside of their context. This is because their contexts are situated in a physical setting influenced and derived from multiple sources (i.e. individual classroom, the school, the principal, the community or the curriculum itself).

According to Lemke (2001), as part of the community, we 'are not simply free to change our minds and the reality is that we depend on one another for our survival and all cultures reflect the fact by making the viability of beliefs contingent on their consequences for the community' (p. 301). This means that in being part of a community, we do not simply make our own decisions and apply any changes. The decisions we make have effects on others (in that community), and the decisions we make must refer to the context or culture of that community. Thus, Olson's (1988) framework suggested that 'what teachers tell us about their practices is, most fundamentally, a reflection of their culture and cannot be properly understood without reference to that culture' (p. 69).

As discussed earlier, Spillane's (2002) framework recognised this element (the sociocultural context) as situated cognition. School contexts, organisational structures, the social environment and the historical context are important factors in shaping teachers' sense-making with respect to a new curriculum policy. One example of sociocultural issues which have been

identified and related to assessment reform in Asia is the exam-oriented culture (e.g. of social environment and historical context). As stated earlier, this is seen as the biggest issue in the implementation of SBA in Hong Kong (Kennedy, 2013). Yu (2010) found that even though the secondary school teachers understood the underlying principles behind SBA and recognised the potential benefits, they still considered it difficult to integrate SBA into the normal curriculum. There were several misinterpretations regarding SBA. One which Yu (2010) particularly noted and as stated earlier in the previous section was that teachers were treating SBA as another exam paper. This was a reflection of the Confucian teaching of 'working hard' in the Chinese culture as stated earlier (Section 2.3.1, Point 2). Hence, when SBA was incorporated into their external examination, teachers treated the SBA seriously and similar to any test or examination that is conducted making it difficult for the teachers to give suitable feedback (Kennedy, 2013). As also explained earlier, in England formative assessment is also being treated high-stakes and so teachers treated formative assessment as important as their external examination (i.e. SATs, GCSE etc.) because schools and pupils' performance are judged by Ofsted on both of these assessment. Teachers had to work hard which prevented them to use formative assessment in making pupil's become owner of their own learning as suggested by Black and Wiliam (1998) . The education system has their own history, a strong influence on present practices which prevents from building assessment practices into teaching and learning.

In other example of studies, teachers may also be seen as the main obstacles to change, meaning that there is a sense of resistance to applying reforms into their practices because of their abilities and competencies as well as the competencies of their learners (e.g. school context). The Malaysian teaching maths and science in English language programme is one example (as discussed in Section 1.2.1) where teachers' competencies, knowledge and abilities were lacking, and this became a factor contributing to the termination of the policy after only seven years of implementation (Jalaludin, 2013). Teachers need to be given enough time to reflect on what change will mean for both their teaching and their students' learning.

Another situation arose in a study conducted in a Cyprus English language secondary teaching context (Tsagari, 2011), in which teachers were not employing the communicative methodology introduced into their education system, because they thought that it was incompatible with the principles underlying examinations. However, the teachers in Tsagari's study stated that if examinations had not been so important they would have employed the methodology suggested for their teaching and learning.

Lecturers in Quyen and Khairaini (2016) studies had also been associated to be the main obstacle of education reform in the context of higher education. They discovered that the lecturers in Malaysia were capable of conducting assessment with feedback. However, there was no proof that the lecturers' feedback was used in a critical way, for example, to use information about students' learning and to make further improvement in their teaching. Therefore, Quyen and Khairaini suggest that there is a need for future

studies to focus on 'practical formative assessment activities to reconcile formative assessment theories within the Asian culture and conditions' (p. 161).

Conversely, teachers may also be seen as strong supporters of introduced changes, may show no signs of resistance and may implement the change but in different ways, although situated in the same school (e.g. school context). In Walshaw and Anthony's (2007) study, none of the secondary school teachers they researched showed any signs of rejection of their national mathematics literacy programme in New Zealand. However, the teachers seemed to demonstrate different approaches to enacting their new curriculum policy. The teachers made sense of the new policy in unique ways; even when in the same school, with the same support structures, teachers will act differently with respect to a policy.

The observations of these studies suggest that a link between the intended initiative and teaching planning needs to be clearly considered when introducing change, because teachers may struggle in their judgment of what is valid and important. As Wedell (2009) asserts:

If policy makers ignore existing local practices and beliefs when deciding on the content and process of change, it immediately makes it very unlikely that the change will ever reach the institutionalized stage of becoming an accepted and normal aspect of most classrooms. (p. 23)

As such, the teachers' professional development is considered important, during times of educational change. This is because educational reform

relies on teachers to achieve the reform vision (Fullan and Miles, 1992; Spillane, 1999). In the following subsection discusses its relevance.

2.4.3 Teachers' professional development during times of educational change

The importance of teachers' professional development has been discussed in much educational literature in the area of change (e.g. Guskey, 2007; Borko, 2004) but despite the fact that teachers' professional development is recognised as important, reviews of professional development studies have consistently pointed out the ineffectiveness of most such programmes (Fiske and Ladd, 2004; Wang et al., 1999; Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995). For instance, professional development grounded in short periods of training or in pre-packaged programmes such as the cascade training method is mostly used to inform curriculum change. In this method, a teacher is trained in a particular aspect of teaching or subject matter, and once they have completed the training, they will be an educator of the next generation of teachers (Griffins, 1999). The theory underlying this training is, first, that teachers select candidates from among themselves to be the trainers; curriculum innovators believe that 'training of others must be grounded in one's own practice' (Duff, 1988, p. 111). Second, in theory, this training model is considered cost-effective, because those who have already been trained can then train others. Third, it is also said to be helpful in delivering information in a shorter time at all levels. But Ono and Ferreira (2010) discovered that most trainers' experiences with the cascade model do not give them the confidence to train others. The researchers further

emphasised that the cascade model gives little to no follow-up support after the initial training.

Huang (2010) agrees, stating that many professional development programmes leave teachers feeling frustrated, because most research on professional development is more 'theoretical and not sufficiently practical to their teaching' (p. 3). Guskey (2007) contended that most programmes are also designed and initiated to change teachers' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions, change teachers' behaviour and practices, hoping that in turn will change students' learning outcomes. As such, such traditional approaches to professional development have come under strong criticism as being ineffective and not providing teachers with sufficient time and activities for the practice of new ideas and skills to increase the teachers' pedagogical or pedagogical content knowledge (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998; Garet, et al., 2001, Lieberman, 1995). However, they often fail, because the programmes do not take into account 1) what motivates teachers to engage in professional development or 2) the process by which teachers' change typically occurs (Guskey, 2007).

Therefore, many researchers have suggested guidelines for implementing changes to professional development programmes. One example of this is the 'Principles to guide policymaker or school reformer' (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995). Guskey, on the other hand, developed a change model for professional development in which it is not the professional development which changes the teachers but the success of the implementation of the reform which changes their attitudes and beliefs. The

key element of significant change in teachers' attitudes and pedagogical beliefs is clear evidence of improvement in the learning outcomes of their students. This means that if teachers use the reform in their practices and see the positive outcomes of its use (from the learning outcomes of the students), this ultimately will change their attitudes and beliefs. The assumption of this model is that 'attitudes and beliefs about teaching in general are also largely derived from classroom experience. Therefore, practices that are found to work that is, those that teachers find useful in helping students attain desired learning outcomes are retained and repeated' (p. 384).

This observation suggests that teachers who are expected to deliver reform initiatives need to experience the reform in their own classrooms and experience the success of the reform during their practices in order for them to use the practice continuously in their teaching and learning. This idea was also echoed by Hayes (1995), who suggested that teachers' existing beliefs or values which influence their practices are important to recognise in professional development programmes during times of educational change:

The function of any course, therefore, must be to examine positive aspects of the existing and the innovative methodology, and to seek to demonstrate to participants that the new approach has something to offer. By recognizing that an existing perception is valid, participants will be more readily disposed to experiment and attempt to accommodate the new in their daily classroom practice. (p. 258)

According to Huang (2010), 'teachers' prior beliefs and experiences influence what they learn' (p. 4). Her study in the context of Taiwanese teachers which investigated teachers' beliefs in relation to professional

development identified that teachers' teaching experiences had contributed in forming their practical knowledge for students' learning and in forming their teaching philosophy. The teachers also expressed dissatisfaction, because the focus on examinations had influenced the way they had to plan their curricula. The teachers were also dissatisfied with the professional development held by the government and schools. They suggested 'teacher-directed professional development activities to foster their professional growth' (p. 23). This observation suggests that there should be greater attention to providing the time and appropriate forms of professional development for teachers experiencing change.

The discussion in this section highlights the need to address teachers' pedagogical beliefs and experience. It also suggests that teachers should be expertly guided and have appropriate access to professional development. Fullan and Steigebauer (1991) agree, stating that teachers experiencing change must have proper guidance, because they may not know what needs to be changed or how to go about changing it. The results and findings of this study about teachers' experience with SBA could be used to guide professional development programmes in order to strengthen SBA or used for future changes in the Malaysian curriculum. In addition, the discussion on the strategies of introducing educational change and the factors contributing to teachers' interpretations of curriculum (teachers' pedagogical beliefs, context and professional development) will be used to critique the Malaysian SBA scheme as discussed in the following section.

2.5 A critique of the Malaysian SBA scheme

SBA was introduced with a set of documents in which the new KSSR English curriculum and assessment were incorporated. I attended two related training sessions. My first training session took place when the new KSSR English curriculum and the SBA were initially launched in Primary One. The second took place the following year when the new system was launched for Year 2 students. Both training sessions lasted for four consecutive days at the district level, which is standard training regarding curriculum changes in Malaysia. As usual, two English primary school teachers (as the district trainers) conducted the training. State trainers trained both the district trainers, whereas the state trainers had their training organised by the Curriculum Unit of Education.

We were briefed about the changes in syllabus content and the implementation of SBA in the education system. In the training sessions, we were shown a sample classroom lesson plan and assessment activities. We were then asked to create our own lesson plans based on a particular unit of a lesson from the Year 1 textbook. Later, we were told to present our lesson plans to other course participants. During the presentations, no comments were made by any of the education officials present.

With the training sessions, policymakers may think that they have done well to communicate the change to teachers, because the trainers themselves were primary teachers who had knowledge of the sociocultural context of

primary schools. In fact, the trainers only briefed course participants about the change and presented a sample lesson plan. Additionally, SBA was only a small part of the discussions during the training, and teachers were simply told to follow the guidelines given in the documents. Training such as this can result in crucial misinterpretations and only provides limited knowledge to teachers about implementing the required changes.

Further, policymakers might not recognize that the power-coercive strategy was actually adopted to implement the SBA. Teachers have no option to reject what has actually been mandated. Adopting a power-coercive strategy can force teachers to implement reform, but it cannot determine what they actually do in the classroom. They may be doing what they are told, but this does not provide assurance that teachers are actually implementing the new curriculum change as intended.

As an example, and as stated in Chapter 1, even though SBA was introduced into primary schools for listening and speaking assessments, most teachers, including myself, were not trained for the SBA of listening and speaking, so the knowledge of how to implement it and the ability to do so were limited. Nor was there any follow-up training to support the teachers' implementation. Hence, teachers were implementing SBA for listening and speaking simply because it was required, although they had very little understanding of how it should actually be implemented.

The previous discussion also highlighted the important role of sociocultural context. As discussed in Chapter 1, primary schools have a very long tradition of teaching to the test, where drilling and memorisation are very much the way in which teaching is conducted. With SBA, teachers are required to adapt to both a new teacher's role and a new learner's role. For example, in the teaching and learning process, teachers are required to become facilitators for learning, to become assessors and to provide pupils with scores and feedback based on their own judgement. Based on that feedback, the learners are expected to be able to assess their own learning abilities. However, after the training, the teachers in my school still had difficulty in understanding their new role(s). For this reason, I believe that teachers may not have the necessary skills to conduct SBA in the classroom and may still be teaching in the same manner that they used to. Finally, the training did not make any attempt to uncover teachers' prior pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning. This may be another factor related to how SBA is actually implemented in the Malaysian primary school classroom.

The study on teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their interpretations of a curriculum reform has been continuing for some years because of its importance. The following sections are most recent studies conducted with regards to educational change.

2.6 Studies on teachers' beliefs and their interpretations of curriculum reforms

Raselimo and Wilmot (2013) conducted a study in one South African developing country in five different secondary schools context in Lesotho. The study investigated eleven geography subject teachers on how they interpreted the learner-centred pedagogy espoused by a reform initiative. The teachers' experiences ranged from five to fifteen years of geography teaching. Using the theory of cognitive knowledge interest, they investigated how teachers' epistemology interacts with the contextual factors which impede the process of curriculum sense-making. Their findings point to a tension between the initiative's policy intentions and teachers' interpretations of the curriculum reform process. The teachers' epistemological beliefs generally showed little support for emancipatory knowledge interests with transformational visions underpinning the learner-centred pedagogy. The teachers also mentioned the following as major constraining factors: the pressure to cover the examination syllabus, learner factors, the absence of a general understanding of and commitment to environmental education and an unsupportive school administration. Raselimo and Wilmot (2013) therefore suggested that changing the curriculum required creating supportive structures in schools, the national education system and society in general.

Von Opell and Aldridge (2015) conducted a study in nine secondary schools in Emirate of Abu Dhabi on the reformed curriculum (requiring secondary school teachers to change their teaching approaches in line with twenty-first

century skills, or the constructivist approach), where the Arab teachers had been entrenched in mostly traditional approaches to teaching. Their study selected fifteen middle secondary school teachers for interview about their beliefs of the reform and proceeded with classroom observations to determine their actual classroom practices. The fifteen teachers were identified and selected from thirty teachers who had gone through the survey questions. The paper focused on the relationship between the results of the Teacher Beliefs Survey and the teachers' classroom practice. The researchers' results indicated that the teachers were willing to comply with the reform initiatives; however, they continued to hold more traditional beliefs about their role in the classroom and their philosophy of teaching and learning acquisition. Observations indicated that the teachers' choice of delivery, use of student collaboration and the physical environment were not what they believed them to be. Interviews and observations showed that culture, fear, a lack of knowledge and understanding by teachers, and incongruent interpretations of terminology were strong mitigating factors which impeded the Arab teachers' implementation of curriculum reform initiatives. The researchers proposed that teachers' knowledge and pedagogical understanding of the proposed model is important for their application of the prescribed change.

Yook (2010) conducted a study on Korean teachers' beliefs about English language education, the sources of their beliefs, their perceptions of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MOE)-initiated reforms in English language education, and the degree of implementation of the

reforms in their classroom teaching. The study surveyed 158 in-service secondary, middle and elementary English Foreign language teachers. Among these, 10 were selected for interviews and observations. Each of the 10 teachers was interviewed three times, and his/her classroom teaching was observed twice. The findings indicated that teachers' beliefs were in line with the communicative-oriented approach as recommended by the initiated English curriculum, and so were the sources of their beliefs, stemming from their own learning experiences from local teachers' education and studying at universities abroad. So teachers' beliefs were not the obstacles to the implementation of the curriculum in their teaching or their classrooms; the obstacles were their negative perceptions of the reform policies and measures (e.g. the way the curriculum was informed or transmitted to the teachers had implications for their practice). These findings identified a mismatch between teachers' beliefs, perceptions and practices.

In the context of assessment reforms, Barley (2013) surveyed the implementation of SBA in Hong Kong through the perspectives of administrators and teachers in a senior secondary school setting. Out of 447 secondary schools, 105 were selected by a stratified sampling (based on student achievements, highest-average-lowest). Barley used questionnaires for each school head, programme coordinator and head of panels as well as 13 teachers and 13 (chosen from secondary 3,4 and 6) students in each school. In her findings, a majority of administrators indicated that they had fully incorporated SBA into their schools, with support measures provided for the implementation. The teachers indicated that they

were well aware of their roles (as facilitators and assessors). They were also well aware of the technical aspects and procedures of the SBA (e.g. the contents, marking). However, the teachers reported that an overwhelming workload was a barrier to the implementation. As such, the ability to provide feedback was absent or limited in the teachers' implementation of their SBA. Barley suggested that teachers should undergo professional training to understand curriculum goals, specifically emphasising the knowledge needed to produce assessment with feedback.

A study on teachers' beliefs and assessment reform was also conducted by Al Sawafi (2014). He investigated the beliefs and practices of secondary school teachers of English with regard to the continuous assessment reform in the Sultanate of Oman. His study explored 237 teachers of English using a questionnaire and then followed six teachers through classroom observations; the choice of these teachers was based on those who were said to have high or strong support in the continuous assessment reform. Each classroom observation was followed by a post-class interview. Al Sawafi's study revealed complex relationships between the assessment reform, the teachers' practices, the teachers' beliefs and contextual factors. These contextual factors widened the mismatches between teachers' stated beliefs about the assessment reform and their actual practice, leading to the teachers' limited uptake of the reform initiative. Al Sawafi suggested the importance of studying teachers' existing beliefs about assessment and other contextual factors; studying these relationships would provide an

understanding of the motives behind teachers' actual assessment practices and their attitudes towards assessment reforms.

Table 2: Recent studies on educational reforms

Author(s) and year of the study	Title of the study and study conducted	Methodology used	Interpretation of findings
Raselimo and Wilmot (2013)	Geography teachers' interpretation of a curriculum reform initiative: the case of the Lesotho Environmental Education Support Project (LEESP) Investigated 11 secondary school teachers	Document analysis Interviews with 11 teachers Classroom observations	Tension between the initiative's policy intentions and teachers' interpretations of the key messages of the curriculum reform process. The teachers' epistemological beliefs generally showed little support for emancipatory knowledge interests with transformational visions underpinning the learner-centred pedagogy.
Von Opell and Aldridge (2015)	Teacher beliefs and education reform in Abu Dhabi: 21st century skills? Investigated teachers in secondary middle school	Survey of 198 teachers Observations of 15 teachers Post-classroom observation interview	Teachers were willing to comply with the reform initiatives; however, they continued to hold more traditional beliefs about their role in the classroom and their philosophy of teaching and learning acquisition.
Yook (2010)	Korean teachers' beliefs about English language education and their impacts upon	Surveyed 158 teachers Interviewed and observed 10	Teachers' beliefs were in line with the communicative-oriented approach

	<p>the Ministry of Education-initiated reforms</p> <p>Teachers in secondary, middle and elementary school</p>	<p>teachers</p>	<p>as recommended by the initiated English curriculum, and so were the sources of their beliefs, stemming from their own learning experiences from local teachers' education and studying at universities abroad. Negative perceptions of the reform policies and measures were the major obstacles to the reform implementation. Their findings identified a mismatch between teachers' beliefs, perceptions and practices.</p>
Barley (2013)	<p>Perspectives of school-based assessment in the NSS curriculum through the eyes of the administrative and teaching stakeholders in Hong Kong</p> <p>Teachers in secondary school</p>	<p>Survey questionnaires with 91 secondary schools (head teachers, programme coordinators, head panels, 13 teachers and 13 students)</p>	<p>The teachers indicated that they were well aware of their role (as facilitators and assessors). They were also well aware of the technical aspects and procedures of the SBA (e.g. the contents, marking). However, the teachers reported that an overwhelming workload was a barrier to the implementation. As such, the ability to provide feedback was absent or</p>

			limited in the teachers' implementation of their SBA.
Al Sawafi (2014)	Investigating English teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to the Continuous Assessment reform in the Sultanate of Oman Teachers in secondary school	Conducted survey questionnaire on 237 teachers Follow-up classroom observations on six teachers Post-classroom observation interview	Complex relationships between the assessment reform, the teachers' practices, teachers' beliefs and contextual factors. These contextual factors widened the mismatches between teachers' stated beliefs about the assessment reform and their actual practices.

These studies could be the most recent conducted on curriculum as well as assessment reform in relation to teachers' pedagogical beliefs and are mostly situated in the context of in secondary schools or higher learning education. Most of the studies discussed in the previous sections about formative assessment also focus mainly on secondary or higher education and little research has been carried out in primary schools or with young learners in general. It is possible that the teachers in this study may react differently to a reform initiative, particularly a reform about assessment, given that they might have a closer bond with their students. The training for primary school teachers as far as I can remember, reminded us that we are teaching young learners and that the teaching should always be fun and playful. There was little emphasis on how assessment should be conducted in primary school. This study will therefore address a gap in our

understanding by focusing on primary school teachers' pedagogical beliefs with regards to formative assessment with young learners in primary schools. The following section discusses in further detail research on the effects of assessment on teachers' classroom teaching practices.

2.7 Unintended outcomes of educational reform on teaching practices

Within general education washback has been the general term used in investigating various aspects of classroom teaching and learning (e.g. Alderson and Wall, 1993) affected by tests or public examinations. For example, Yu (2010) investigated washback related to SBA in the Hong Kong Secondary school education system and found that the teachers' practices were inconsistent with the desired outcomes of policymakers. SBA was treated the same way as any other exam, because SBA was considered to be high-stakes, where the grades from the assessment contributed to students' final marks in the national examination. Yu's observations detailed the following reasons for teachers' practice of SBA: the teachers only understood some of the underlying principles of SBA, they only recognised some of its potential benefits and they found it difficult to integrate SBA into the normal curriculum.

Similarly, Pan (2009) discussed the unintended consequences of changes in tests and public examinations as both positive and negative, for example, in classroom settings. She says that tests induce teachers to cover their

subjects thoroughly, motivate students to work harder and design beneficial teaching and learning activities. Alternately, tests can also narrow the curriculum and cut down instructional time, which leads to teaching to the test, bringing anxiety to teachers and students and distorting their performance. The effect of washback also relates to classroom teaching; Messick (1996, p. 241) asserts that washback is 'the extent to which tests influence language teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise necessarily do'.

However, SBA is a concept of assessment embedded in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the term 'unintended outcome' is often used to understand the phenomena surrounding teachers' teaching practices with the introduction of SBA. Unintended outcomes are the unexpected experiences which emerge or form from teachers' understanding and knowledge in regards to change (e.g. teachers making extra effort in support of SBA, such as doing small classroom studies and organising and introducing other beneficial activities for teaching and learning) (Lam, 2012). Lam cites Posner (2004, p. 199) in giving examples of outcomes which can enlighten some important aspects of a curriculum:

...the variety of ways it has been implemented, and the possible pitfalls teachers might face in using it. What are the potentials problems or rough spots in its operation? What aspects have been crucial for its success? How has the curriculum been implemented? What kinds of adaptations have been productive?

The above quotation will be helpful as guidelines when I discuss the factors surrounding the practice of SBA among English primary school teachers in Malaysia. This guidelines will help to focus on some particular points (e.g.

the aspects crucial for its success, problems in the implementation) the way SBA is practiced and implemented by the teachers in this study.

2.8 Summary

As discussed in Section 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, formative assessment is closely associated with feedback. Thus, the discussion in these sections also revealed the importance for students to be responsive towards feedback in order to help them move towards their learning goals. However, my review of the sample of studies used in this chapter (mostly in secondary and education) revealed that feedback in higher education institutions and secondary schools has not been without challenges. Among these challenges are large class size, students not reading comments when feedback is accompanied by grades, students not understanding the feedback given to them, teachers having trouble giving effective feedback because of workloads and the difficulty of university and secondary students to respond to feedback. In this study of Malaysian primary school teachers, it would therefore be important to find evidence of the effectiveness of their feedback practices and the impact on pupils' learning. Additionally, the pupils may also have trouble being responsive to the feedback because of their age (7-12 years). The learners' age may be one contributing factor for the effective implementation of the Malaysian primary school SBA in this study. One aim of this study is to investigate its relevance.

This chapter also discussed how the study of teachers' pedagogical beliefs has been ongoing, due to the importance and continued relevance of these

beliefs regarding curriculum change. This study acknowledges the potentially important contribution of teachers' pedagogical beliefs by seeking evidence of teachers' beliefs about pedagogy, learning and assessment, and how they are reflected (or not) in their teaching and assessment practices.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research questions that I address and describes how I should address them. First, I will delineate the research paradigm which will assist me in answering these questions. I will then describe the sites chosen for the study and how the participants were selected to take part in the research. I will also give a detailed explanation of how I gained access to the particular schools involved in my study. As humans are the subjects of the study, the ethical considerations are also discussed in the following section. I then outline the data collection and analysis and describe the challenges I encountered during my fieldwork. Finally, I touch on issues related to the trustworthiness of qualitative research and how this issue was addressed.

3.2 The interpretive paradigm

This study examines primary school teachers' interpretations of the Malaysian School-Based Assessment (SBA) and how far they match with the practices recommended. It also sheds light on the educational beliefs affecting such interpretations, both conceptually and practically. An evaluative-interpretive research stance is thought to be the most suitable methodology for approaching the topic. According to Richards (2003), it is important that the researcher understands the theoretical assumption of his

or her research paradigm, for failure to do so will entail serious consequences for the whole enquiry.

The interpretive approach aims to advance knowledge by describing and interpreting the phenomena of the world in order to share obtained meaning with others (Bassey, 1999). Walsham (1993) argues that there are no 'correct' or 'incorrect' theories in the interpretive tradition; they should merely be judged on how 'interesting' they are to the researcher and to others working in the same field. Similarly, Willis (1995) argues that there is no single correct route to, or particular method of acquiring, knowledge. According to Aikenhead (1997), the interpretive paradigm is underpinned by observation and interpretation; to observe is to collect information on an event, while to interpret is to draw meaning from that information. This places emphasis and value on the human and interpretative aspects of learning about the social world and the significance of the investigator's own interpretations and understanding of the phenomenon under study (Snape and Spencer, 2003).

My study has benefitted from the interpretive research paradigm in the following ways:

- It gave me the opportunity to work with people in their normal setting.
- It offered me the flexibility of using different methods to understand the phenomenon being investigated.
- It allowed me to establish and develop relationships with the participants in the study.

- It enhanced my understanding of the participants' reasoning behind their actions

3.3 The research questions

As I have demonstrated, the existing literature emphasises the importance of studying the ways in which teachers implement pedagogical innovations and how their beliefs shape what they actually do (Orafi, 2008; Stipek et al., 2001; Kurborska, 2011). As stated in Section 2.4.1, the choices teachers make about what they do in their classrooms are 'underpinned by beliefs about the nature of language, the nature of the learning process and the nature of the teaching act' (Nunan, 2004, p. 6). Additionally, the context of the study tells us that teachers' concerns and beliefs were not taken into consideration in the introduction and implementation of the Malaysian SBA; nor was any thought given to the contextual factors which might affect their interpretation of it. Based on this, the following research questions were suggested:

1. What are the pedagogical beliefs or values and area of knowledge of the teachers who claim to be implementing SBA, and what do they report as having changed in their assessment practice since the introduction of SBA?
2. How closely do these changes match those intended in the Malaysian SBA curriculum document?
3. What contextual factors appear to be affecting the willingness or ability of Malaysian teachers to implement SBA?

3.4 The site selection

According to Walford (2001), researchers often settle on a study site to which they can easily gain convenient and ready access. In addition, Marshall and Rossmann (1999, p. 60) state that the site is likely to be a place where the researcher can 'build trusting relations with the participants in the study and where data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured'.

Based on the above, I chose sites which were convenient and accessible for me. My primary school teaching experience and background of networking with English language teachers from different schools helped me in identifying the participating teachers.

3.5 Gaining access

In order to gain access, I first made an application to the Malaysian Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in December 2014 for permission to conduct the study. The official approval letter from EPU was essential for gaining complete access to the Malaysian primary school. I also gained approval from the University of Leeds ethics committee. Both the EPU letter and the ethical approval were necessary in order to proceed with my fieldwork. As far as the study was concerned, I also gained permission from both the Ministry of Education and the State Education Department, in order to be able to gain access to all areas of the primary schools in the state in which I conducted my study. However, according to Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 85), 'if permission is granted from up high without first checking with those

below' (teachers or principals and others involved in the study), researchers are 'likely to ruffle feathers'. Accordingly, five months prior to data collection, I made contact with teachers and head teachers whom I had identified to be assessed in the study, in order to seek their approval and willingness to participate. All heads and teachers assured me informally that they would participate for the duration of the project. Once I had gained verbal consent from the appropriate staff members, I sent my official letter of application to each head teacher via email in January 2015. One month later, I got a reply from each school in the form of an official invitation letter giving me full access to conduct my study.

3.6 Gaining access to two new sites

During my preliminary interviews with selected participants, I was introduced to two other participants by the teachers whom I interviewed, because according to the teachers with whom I had conversed, I might be able to gain good information from these other two participants regarding the Malaysian primary school SBA. As this study allowed for flexibility in reaching an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, I decided to approach these two teachers as well. The main reasons were that they were:

- teachers who claimed to be implementing SBA as mandated and
- teachers who thought highly and positively about the use of SBA in improving learning.

Although I did not know them, I was told I could get in touch with them through a Facebook page. I am not an active user of this media, but I managed to contact them both by this means. I arranged to meet these teachers on separate weekends, and I conducted interviews to discover whether they had anything to tell me about the SBA. I did gain valuable information from both of them, and I wished to proceed to carry out fieldwork in their respective schools. Accordingly, I gave each of them my letter of permission from the EPU, the Ministry of Education and the State Education Department for them to give to their heads of school.

One of the heads was not happy with the way I had approached her teacher without consulting with her first, and she declined to allow me access. That night, I drafted a letter informing her of my intentions and the overall aim of the study, in the hope of helping her understand in more detail (see the letter in the Appendix P). My intention was not to persuade her but first to apologise and then to inform her of the purview of the research as a whole, so that even if she still declined, she would have all the appropriate information at her disposal. I greeted her and offered my explanation. In the course of the conversation, she agreed to let me work in her school, under the following conditions:

- I was not allowed to enter the class during a lesson, but I could use audio and video to record the whole event.
- I could interview other teachers when they were willing and free to do so.

The whole process taught me a valuable lesson, namely, that the following should be taken into serious consideration:

- It is important to seek verbal consent from the head teacher, even when the individual participant has agreed to meet, because different schools operate differently. This applies even if the intention is merely to conduct an informal meeting with the target participant.
- It was important to immediately meet with the head teacher to apologise and thoroughly explain the intentions behind the fieldwork, even if no access were to be granted.
- It is important always to smile and be humble upon entering the school premises. This will greatly assist in the later development of a positive relationship with the entire school community.

3.7 Identifying the participants

In this study, I employed a purposeful sampling strategy. Patton (2002) says:

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of inquiry (p. 230).

Also, according to Merriam (2009), to begin purposeful sampling, one must first:

determine what selection criteria are essential in choosing the people or sites to be studied. The criteria that are established for purposeful sampling directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases (pp. 77–78).

My plan was to interview five participants and choose three for an in-depth investigation. These three were identified based on their claims that they were implementing the SBA as mandated, that they had made significant changes since its introduction, that they were very familiar with its principles

and that they were best placed to understand the reasons why it was being introduced to the Malaysian primary school curriculum. From the five, I identified Liz (all teachers names in this study are pseudonyms) as my first case for the study. After transcribing the interviews with the other four participants, Mae, Su, Daniel and Anna, I realized that they did not reflect the kinds of characteristics I was seeking (see Section 3.6) with respect to teachers' reactions to SBA. However, they did provide valuable insights in the interviews I conducted with them (mostly about their concerns regarding SBA), which will be discussed in the findings chapter. The Table 3 below gives the list of teachers from whom I secured a willingness to participate in my preliminary interviews.

Table 3: The five teachers' background information

Participant	Gender	Number of years' experience	Teacher training education		University qualifications
			Year(s)	Subject	
Mae	Female	17 years	2 ½	General Teaching Certificate	Degree in Physical Education
Liz	Female	24 years	2 ½	English Teaching Diploma	Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)
Su	Female	22 years	2 ½	English Teaching Diploma	Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)
Daniel	Male	3 years	4	English Teaching Training Degree	-

Anna	Female	4 years	2 ½	English Teaching Certificate	Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)
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During the preliminary interview with Daniel, he mentioned a teacher named Chen and told me that I might get more information about the SBA from her. As the study's aim was to seek out and identify teachers who fit the aforementioned description in terms of working well with SBA, I therefore took the opportunity to get in touch with Chen and interview her. My intuition in taking the time to interview Chen allowed me to identify her as the second case for the study. While I interviewed Chen, she, in turn, introduced me to Dennis, whom she assured me could also give me some useful information about SBA. Accordingly, Dennis was identified as the third case in this study. The table below describes the three teachers with whom I conducted an in-depth exploration in the form of observations and post-interview procedures, in order to gain more extensive information about the SBA. Creswell (2012) states that engaging with a smaller number of participants enhances the quality of a case study.

Table 4: The three case teachers' background

No. of case	Participant	Gender	Number of years' experience	Teacher training education		University qualifications
				Year(s)	Subject	
1	Liz	Female	24 years	2 ½	English Teaching Certificate	Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language

						(TESL)
2	Chen	Female	8 years	2 ½	English Teaching Diploma	Pursuing her Degree in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL)
3	Dennis	Male	10 years	2 ½	English Teaching Diploma	Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)

In summary, I had seven participants in this study, and I chose only three teachers (Liz, Chen, Dennis) for an in-depth investigation of the practices with regards to SBA in Malaysian primary schools. Nevertheless, the data from the other four participants (Anna, Su, Daniel, Mae) are also used in the cross-analysis section (in Chapter 5).

3.8 Ethical considerations

In qualitative studies, ethical dilemmas often emerge with respect to data collection and the dissemination of findings (e.g. how much the researcher should reveal of the actual purpose of the study, and how informed consent can be gained from participants). Creswell (2012) identified five stages in the study at which the researcher should anticipate ethical issues: 1) prior to conducting the study; 2) the beginning of the study; 3) during the collection of data; 4) during the analysis of the data and; 5) when reporting, sharing and storing data.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) caution, 'While people may make up guidelines for ethical decision making, the tough ethical decisions ultimately reside with you, with your values and with your judgements of right and wrong' (p. 52). Similarly, Merriam (2002, p. 250) states that 'actual ethical practice comes down to the individual researcher's own values and ethics'.

Considering the above concerns, I followed Creswell's (2012) five stages at which ethical issues need to be anticipated; the Table 5 outlines how I addressed each of these issues.

Table 5: Addressing ethical issues of the study (adapted from Creswell, 2012, pp. 23-24)

When in the process of research the ethical issue occurs	Type of ethical issue	How I addressed the issue
Prior to conducting the study	Examine professional association standards. Seek college/university approval on campus through an institutional review board (IRB). Gain local permission from site and participants. Select a site without a vested interest in outcome of study. Negotiate authorship for publication.	Since this study was conducted in Malaysian public primary schools, I gained approval from the University of Leeds Ethics Committee and the Malaysian Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in December 2014. My primary school teaching experience and networking with English teachers from different schools assisted me in identifying my participants and the willingness of administrators to participate. I both conducted verbal discussion and provided written information for the participants, whilst providing a session of discussion to inform them of the intention of the whole study.

Beginning of the study	<p>Identify a research problem which will benefit participants.</p> <p>Disclose the purpose of the study.</p> <p>Do not pressure participants into signing consent forms.</p> <p>Respect norms and charters of indigenous societies.</p> <p>Be sensitive to needs of vulnerable populations (e.g. children).</p>	<p>I had contacted both teachers and administrators prior to the study to explain its purpose. Once they agreed and expressed their willingness, consent forms and permission letters from the EPU and the State Education Department were sent to each school. The aim of this procedure was to give both teachers and administrators a clear overview of the study.</p> <p>As I used to be a primary school teacher, I am used to how the school system works.</p>
Collection of data	<p>Respect the site and disrupt as little as possible.</p> <p>Make certain that all participants receive the same treatment.</p> <p>Avoid deceiving participants.</p> <p>Respect potential power imbalances and exploitation of participations (e.g. interviewing, observing).</p> <p>Make sure that all the participants are informed about the purpose of the study prior to the investigation.</p>	<p>The schools and participants were emailed the information sheets and consent forms after they had agreed to participate in the study.</p> <p>During the actual fieldwork, I again explained to the participants the procedure of the whole study and how the data would be used later on.</p> <p>Participants were only observed and interviewed according to the time and day they were most comfortable with.</p>
Analysis of data	<p>Avoid siding with participants (going native).</p> <p>Avoid disclosing only positive results.</p> <p>Respect the privacy and anonymity of participants</p>	<p>Findings were presented based on what was seen and recorded during my fieldwork with the participants; however, I am not saying that the data presented were not influenced by my experience as an ex-primary school teacher or by my being part of the school culture for 11 years.</p> <p>This study asked the teachers</p>

		to think critically about government policy, and therefore, they needed reassurance that nothing they might say would be divulged to the government and affect their careers. Therefore, to ensure that the participants were protected, besides using pseudonyms, I made sure that the opinions, views, information or statements they provided did not contain any markers of the participants' identities.
Reporting, sharing and storing of data	<p>Avoid falsifying authorship, evidence, data, findings and conclusions.</p> <p>Avoid disclosing information which would harm participants.</p> <p>Communicate in clear, straightforward and appropriate language.</p> <p>Share data with others.</p> <p>Retain raw data and other materials (e.g. details of procedures, instruments).</p> <p>Do not duplicate or piecemeal publications.</p> <p>Provide complete proof of compliance with ethical issues and lack of conflicts of interest, if requested.</p> <p>State who owns the data from a study.</p>	<p>Once data were analysed I conducted discussions with each of the participants and heads of schools to ask for their verifications of the findings.</p> <p>Data were interpreted, articulated meaningfully to the best of the researcher's ability and shared through seminars, conferences and in this thesis.</p> <p>The raw data will be kept for three years after the completion of the study. The reason for this is that the government may find the data useful for future policy implementation.</p>

3.9 Data collection

As stated in Section 3.1, this study was informed and directed by the interpretive research paradigm; therefore, the data collection and the type of data collected had to be in accordance with this position.

The aims of the interpretive approach are to describe and interpret the phenomena of the world in order to obtain meaning which is shared with others (Bassey, 1999) and to understand the 'meaning of actions' of those under study (Anderson and Burns, 1989, p. 67). I adopted semi-structured interviews and non-participatory observation as the most suitable data collection methods for this study. A semi-structured interview, while guided by a topic and questions, allows the researcher to apply flexibility to gain insights into the participant's experiences (Kvale, 1996), whilst observation is characterised by the use of field notes and audio or video recordings. The one month journal produced by the three participants in this is used to give a clearer understanding of how SBA is practiced in the absence of the researcher. The reasons for choosing these techniques are outlined as follows.

3.9.1 Semi-structured interview

A semi-structured interview was used because:

- it allows the subject to give his or her perspectives and the meaning the person attaches to what goes on in their world (Patton, 2002) and

- it encourages the subject to talk about his or her area of interest in more depth and to pick up on topics and issues related to the situation under discussion (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007).

3.9.2 Non-participatory observation

The technique of non-participatory observation was used because:

- it gives the observer flexibility in terms of the information gathered and how it is recorded (Robson, 2002);
- it provides an in-depth and comprehensive picture of the study under investigation (Cohen et al., 2007) and
- it provides the opportunity for the researcher to develop questions related to the kind of behaviour being observed. These questions will provide the basis for the researcher to conduct follow-up interviews with the participants and discuss the rationales and meanings behind their behaviours (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992).

3.9.3 Field notes

Field notes were used because:

- it allows the researcher to remember events or experiences that had occurred and how it occurred on a particular day (when it is not recorded and captured using video or mp3 recorder) (Bernard, 2006) through 'watching and listening' (Hughes, 1994, p. 37).
- it allows the researcher to self-reflect, 'and self-reflection is crucial for meaning-making' of the data (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006, p.1) during the preliminary stages of analysis as well as at later stage of the analysis process.

3.9.4 Teachers' journal

The teachers' journal was used because:

- it provides the means for the participants to reflect on experience with SBA (without the presence of the researcher) and assist in producing viable data for the study (Lamb, 2013).
- it assists in understanding participants' experience with regards to the study (Murray and Kujundzic, 2005).

The following is a detailed account of the processes by which data were collected and analysed.

3.10 Preliminary interview

First, I conducted preliminary interviews with Mae, Liz, Su, Daniel and Anna (see Table 3) . Each interview lasted about 30 to 40 minutes. The purpose of these interviews was to identify the participants who claimed to have made the most significant changes (see also Section 3.5) since the introduction of the SBA, who were most familiar with the principles of SBA and who best understood the reasons why SBA was being introduced to the primary school curriculum. I had intended to invite three of these interviewees to participate further in the project and to provide extensive information about the SBA. However, only Liz was identified as having made a significant change; therefore, I identified her as my first case. Then, during my interview with Daniel, he told me about Chen, whom he thought would give me the information about the SBA which I needed. I conducted a preliminary interview with Chen and identified her as my second case. Through Chen, I was introduced to Dennis, and I identified him as my third case, as described

above. However, when I met Dennis, I did not record our conversation, because I had only intended to meet him informally at first. However, during the meeting, he began talking about his experiences with SBA and how the system was working, and I realised that it would not be reasonable to ask him for a formal interview later. Therefore, to understand this participant, I am reliant on the notes I took at that time and on my memories of the encounter.

My interviews with Mae and Liz took place in the first week of June 2015; in the second week, it was Su's and Daniel's turn, and in the third week, I spoke to Anna. The preliminary interview with Chen took place on 4 July 2015, and Dennis's was on 18 July. There was a considerable time gap between Anna and Chen and between Chen and Dennis because, as mentioned earlier, Chen was introduced by Daniel who, in turn, introduced me to Dennis. It took me several weeks to locate the new interviewees.

Altogether, I had seven participants, and I managed to audio record six of them. Consent was granted for the recording in each case. After the preliminary interviews, I selected three of the respondents (Liz, Chen and Dennis) to participate further in the study and spent one month at each of their sites. I started in Liz's school, then moved on to Chen's and finished in Dennis's. Bernard (2006) states that people may change their behaviours around researchers, and in order to minimise these changes and allow their subjects to adjust to their existence, researchers should stay for longer in each school. Engaging with a smaller number of participants would allow me

to spend more time with the teachers, to build an atmosphere of trust and to mitigate undue influence on my part.

3.10.1 Preliminary classroom observation

Prior to the actual classroom observation with Liz, Chen and Dennis, I conducted a preliminary observation. The purpose of this was to gain familiarity with school practices. Patton (1990, p. 473) considers this process of getting 'used to each other' to be a relationship-building technique. The preliminary observation took place during the first week of the research at each school, and it helped me in the following ways:

- It gave me the opportunity to familiarise myself with the teachers' and students' practices.
- It gave the teacher and the students the opportunity to become accustomed to my presence in the classroom.
- It deepened my understanding of the reasons why teachers lead their classroom in a particular way.
- It allowed me to establish relationships with the participants in the study.

3.10.2 Actual classroom observation

The actual classroom observation took place in the second and third weeks of my fieldwork in each school. In total, I undertook six classroom observations, two for each participant. I began my fieldwork in Liz's school in the fourth week of June 2015, during the first week of August (beginning on the 4th) in Chen's school and in the second week of September (from the 14th) in Dennis's school. I spent about a month in each school. These

classroom observations focused on the materials that the teachers decided to use, the lesson structures they employed and the activities they adopted within the classroom.

At the time I observed Liz, she was teaching a Year One (age 7) classroom. Liz had two separate classes of different types, so I observed both, observing her in two separate weeks (the second and third weeks of my study period). Liz was teaching Unit 8 in the Year One textbook, *My mum*, focusing on the writing and reading modules (Figure 1). During my observations, I used an mp3 recorder and also took some field notes to complement the recorded data. Field notes are a 'written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study' (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007, p. 119). My notes (field notes) in this case included the seating arrangements, the behaviour of the students and the overall atmosphere and conditions while lessons were conducted.

Chen was teaching a Year Five (age 11) classroom when I observed her; therefore, my analysis of the data will involve only this class. The lessons I observed were on the theme 'World of Stories', using the topic 'Something weird happened' and another topic from unit 12 in the textbook, entitled, 'Something to learn from'. The first lesson was part of the language arts module, and the second was from the writing module. I was not personally present during the observation, because the head teacher did not allow me to enter the classroom for the duration of the lesson (see, Section 3.5). The observation was assisted by the use of a video camera and an audio

recording. Accordingly, my analysis of the data will be based on what is seen and heard on the recordings. To complement this, I took notes on the physical classroom settings based on the analysis of the videos.

Dennis was teaching a Year Two class (age 8) at the time the observation was conducted. The first lesson I observed was also on the theme, 'World of Stories', and the second was on the theme, 'World of Knowledge', using the topic, 'Sea animals'. My observation of Dennis was assisted by an audio recording, and during the observation. I also took field notes, which included comprehensive descriptions of Dennis' practices, the condition of the classroom, the physical setting and the events which occurred during the lessons.

During the classroom observations, my role was defined as 'observer-as-participant', whereby I 'observed and interacted closely enough with members to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership' (Adler and Adler, 1998, p. 85). My intention was to observe events in their natural setting (the classroom). While I do not claim that my presence had no impact on the classroom, on the planning of the teachers' lesson planning or on the whole process of the teachers' teaching and learning, I did my best to minimise this and to do the following:

- I first conducted a preliminary classroom observation during the first week of my fieldwork, as mentioned earlier.
- I kept a close relationship with the students and the teachers by regularly just talking with them during my fieldwork.

- I volunteered to relieve classes (when teachers had to attend district meetings, courses etc.), especially the class I was going to observe with Liz.
- I participated in all the school activities, which included some of the following:
 - school meetings,
 - daily routine activities,
 - school assemblies and
 - yearly activities not related to teaching.

As a result of my doing this, the teachers and the students started to call me *cikgu* (teacher). I felt as though I were part of the school community. When I started observing, different students would approach me and start asking what I was doing, while the teaching and learning was still in process. Although my existence in the school as a researcher might not have been noticeable but my presence, perhaps, a threat to the maintaining of normal activities.

The factors mentioned below may also have had some influence on the teachers' practices while I observed them:

- Malaysian primary school teachers are unused to being observed; classroom observation is sometimes viewed as making judgments or as being a disruption to the class teaching and learning hour. The terms by which Chen's headmistress allowed me access constitute one example of this. Another important factor is that the teacher must have prepared their lesson well than usual prior to the observations and may deviate from what they normally do in their teaching and learning classroom. The teachers in this study were also informed that they will be observed on their classroom assessment (the SBA) and

they must have conducted assessments that they normally would have not done; therefore, the classroom observations may not be a true reflection of the teachers' practices. I was also very careful about the minimum numbers of classroom observations conducted with the teachers in this study because I felt that it was an imposition on the teachers and the schools. As an example, in Chen's school, the first thing that the head teacher asked when I mentioned the classroom observation was how many times I was going to observe her teacher. However, this was about SBA, and the teachers chosen for the study had claimed that they were implementing the SBA in their lessons. Thus, since the classroom observations focused on how the lessons were conducted with SBA; two observations per teacher were considered enough.

- Both Liz and Dennis' schools were public primary schools, which is an environment, language and ethos of practice with which I am familiar; however, Chen's school was a public primary Chinese school. This meant that 95% of the teaching staff was Chinese, including the head teacher. The Chinese language was routinely used for communication by the teachers. I could not understand what was being said most of the time. Although I did get to speak with other teachers (besides Chen), I always had to carefully consider what to ask them, so they would be able to understand the Malay language I was using. The language barriers also prevented me from fully having that sense of belonging in the primary school system, compared to when I was in Liz and Dennis's schools.
- The teachers' commitment to cooperate with the study was not always 100%. For example, when I asked Dennis for his lesson plans and journals, it took several attempts at contact before he answered. And in the end, I still could not gain access to his lesson plans for the classroom observations I had with him nor the month journal I requested from him. However, my daily conversations with Dennis helped me to understand the situation and implementation of SBA in his school, information which I will use in my findings chapter.

3.10.3 Post-classroom observation interview

The classroom observations generated a number of issues, themes and questions. Two rounds of post-observation interviews were conducted. Initially, I planned to interview the teachers either after the observation or after each school session had ended, but the teachers had very tight schedules in terms of moving from one class to another, and with so many other school activities, it proved rather difficult to meet my original schedule; in addition, I needed time to transcribe the observations. Therefore, I made appointments with the teachers on the days they were available, considering the following:

- It is normal for Malaysian primary school teachers to have tight teaching schedules and to be in a rush to get from one class to another; therefore, I was not able to conduct a post-classroom observation interview immediately after every lesson. I also needed time to transcribe the audio/video recordings in order to generate issues, themes and questions pertaining to their practices. For these reasons, it was about a week before the post-classroom observations/discussions could be conducted. But the delay also gave me time to transcribe the classroom observations thoroughly and to note issues, questions and themes for discussion.
- The schools in which the fieldwork was conducted were not always conducive to conducting the post-observation interviews. There was a lack of rooms in which the interview could be conducted. We had to find the most suitable time possible, in order to minimise the noises of other teachers chatting or students coming in and out of the teachers' rooms while the interview was conducted. However, this was not always possible. The location of the preliminary interviews was also a problem. They were carried out in places which the participants could easily get to, since it was the school holidays at this point. I let them

decide the place, but I also gave them some ideas. Mae, Liz, Su, Daniel and Chen decided that the preliminary interview should be conducted in their district library. During my interview with Su, we were allowed to use the discussion room. However, with Mae, Liz, Daniel and Chen we had to use the open area; discussion rooms were off limits for us, unless we came in groups. Accordingly, these interviews were accompanied by the sounds of people chatting, walking and watching television. The interview with Anna was conducted in her home, because she was still on maternity leave for another week before going back to work. The interview sometimes had to be stopped momentarily, while she attended to her children.

3.10.4 Field notes and teachers' journals

The field notes (which I also called notes, personal notes or meeting notes) was taken after my interview with the teachers in this study, during and after each of my classroom observation, after my daily conversations with the teachers in the study (e.g. with Dennis) or with other teachers and after each meetings and activities I attended during my fieldwork. The field notes assisted me in summarizing my data at the preliminary stage of the analysis. It also assisted me in reflecting each situation inside the classroom during my classroom observations with the teachers in the study. For examples, what the teachers and the pupils did throughout the lesson and assessment activities (see Section 4.1 on Liz's portrayal). It also helped me in generating my themes as I further analysed my data.

Where as, the one month journal in which I requested from the three teachers in this study, assisted me in identifying what and how the teachers were doing with SBA during my absence. Thus, it also helped me to identify

and verify which component of the English language that the teachers put more focused on in their assessment activities. The primary aim of the teachers' journals were also to provide me with further understanding of how SBA was doing in the teachers' daily practices.

To sum up, the entire process of the study was not always in accordance with the plan. This required the researcher to make decisions which had not been considered during the preliminary stage. My familiarity with the study context did not preclude encountering any difficulties and challenges.

3.10.5 Data analysis

The preliminary interviews with Mae, Liz, Su, Daniel and Anne were conducted entirely in the Malay language; however, those with Chen and Dennis were in English, based on their choice and using the language they felt most comfortable with. All were fully transcribed from the audio recordings in order to obtain detailed accounts of what was said, how it was said and what was not said. I began the transcriptions after each interview was conducted. In translating the Malay language interviews to English, I aimed to maintain the original meaning as far as possible. To check my translation, I gave one interview to a Malaysian PhD friend studying at the University of East Anglia and asked her to translate it into English.

After each interview, I also employed a summarisation technique. Summarizing gives a brief statement of the main points of (something), in other words, it's a technique that helps to condense, outline, recap and

review of (something). It's a technique that helps to understand the basic ideas behind the piles of data or information collected from the fieldwork. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that summarizing can help to move the interpretation of the data. Specifically, working 'on writing a clear paragraph summarizing what it is you want to tell the readers' (p. 197) will help the writer's interpretation of the data more clearer and provide basic assumption of what all the data means to the writer. As data analysis is a process of making sense out of the data and to make sense out of the data involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read (Merriam, 2009, p.176). To me, summarizing is a process that helped me to review, gave a preliminary interpretation and basic assumption of the data generated from the interview. Because data analysis is a complex process (involves moving back and forth between bits of data), and summarization helped me in identifying and locating which set or part of the data is giving me basic ideas in forming categories, themes and some ideas the answer to my research question(s). For instance, one purpose of this study (also one of my research questions) is to identify teachers' interpretation of SBA in terms of their knowledge and pedagogical beliefs about SBA. To know this after each interview I started transcribing immediately (this allows me to reflect and summarize the whole interview more clearer). From the summary, I outlined which sentence says about teachers' knowledge and pedagogical beliefs about SBA and then I move back to the interview data to find quotations to provide evidence to these findings. I also referred to my notes (field notes) as additional evidence for

the findings and to further assist me with the summaries. It was a starting point for me to portray and tell the story of my participants.

The classroom observations were also fully transcribed and also summarised in order to provide a detailed account of the teachers' practices. The lessons were conducted mainly in English, with only a few using the Malay language. Therefore, I did not consider it necessary to have these transcriptions member checked. In the analysis, the focus was on the materials the teachers decided to use, the lesson structures they employed and the activities they had adopted within the classroom. I then identified the practices which characterised the Malaysian primary teachers' implementation of SBA and compared them with those recommended by the SBA document. I conducted a review of the audio recordings, lesson observations, field notes, teachers' lesson plans and journals in order to identify the issues, themes and questions relating to their practices. When transcribing the recorded interviews, I analysed what the teachers said, how they said it and what was not said. I aimed to present the intended meaning of their words to the best of my ability. Once I outlined the teachers' practices, I categorized each of their practices manually. I then transferred all of these categories to NVIVO. The NVIVO program helped me to organize the relevant themes for these categories (see explanation in Section 3.10.6).

While analysing and making sense of the data from the post-observation interviews, I reread the transcriptions more than once, referred to my research questions and looked for comments relating to the teachers'

educational beliefs, the influences of these beliefs and the factors which may have influenced how the teachers interpreted and implemented SBA. The interview data were then coded and put into categories. For example, if the data revealed that instructional decisions were frequently made in relation to the students (e.g. their abilities, willingness and so on), this was categorised under teachers' beliefs about students. The coding was done manually.

Qualitative data is 'interpretive' in that people make their own particular or personal interpretations of descriptions of events (Creswell, 2012). This means that the researcher brings his/her own perspective to the interpretation by building patterns, categories and themes through learning and understanding the pedagogical beliefs of the participants. Creswell (2012) also states that there is no single accepted approach to analysing data, with the chosen approach instead being based on the researcher's personal assessment. This also means that a researcher needs to be careful and precise when selecting her themes and how the data will be derived in her findings.

The primary aim of the preliminary interviews was to determine which participants claimed to have an understanding or knowledge of SBA or to have experienced a significant change in practices since its introduction.

Therefore, while transcribing the audio recordings using Microsoft Word, I took notes and coded them manually (for example for Liz's interview I coded

as liz/l1/06-15/L1-L143³). I also referred to my first research question to form an in-depth understanding of what was said, how it was said and what was not said. After this, I transferred my codes into the following categories in order to identify which three participants to observe further and to gain extensive information about SBA implementation through my classroom observations:

- What are the teachers' conceptions of the SBA?
- How do they implement it?
- What changes have they experienced in their practices?

These categories were then determined and labelled as 'teachers', knowledge and pedagogical beliefs about SBA and reports of changes in assessment practices since SBA'.

3.10.6 Coding classroom observations and post-classroom observation interviews

The primary purpose of the classroom observations was to investigate the teachers' practices in their implementation of SBA. In making sense of the data, while transcribing the audio/video recordings, I also took notes on any concepts, ideas and hunches which occurred, between the margin of the transcript and the field notes as well as my summary of their practices;

³ All the audio recordings were fully transcribed, and in translating her interview to English, I aimed to maintain the original meaning as far as possible. Coding of the interview/classroom observation/field notes/journals: (participant's name/number of interview conducted/month and year of the interview, the line numbers of transcribed interview) [I = interview; L = Line]

Creswell (2012) calls this a means of exploring the general sense of the data. When transcribing, I first used Microsoft Word and later loaded my documents into the NVivo software on my office desktop computer at the University of Leeds after completing all my fieldwork. From the ideas, I then began with segmenting and labelling broad themes in the data using the NVivo software. I referred to my second research question and tried to form an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon to the best of my ability. I looked for repetition of activities conducted prior to the teachers' claim of conducting assessment in the classroom. For example, if the teacher repeatedly did the same activities (e.g. memorization, repetition of words) in her teaching prior to her classroom assessment, I categorized this under the heading of teachers' belief about memorization. The teachers were then asked the reasons for such repeated teaching practices. I also used the codes to build descriptions, which helped me to visualise details of the event and themes. The analysis of the data generated some issues, themes and questions, which were then used in the post-classroom observation interviews (as stated earlier I look at the area where a teacher displayed consistent use of the same lesson structure, such as repetitions of words and reading after the teacher), they were asked to give their reasons for working in this way. Their verbal commentaries were then transcribed using Word, before loading the transcriptions into NVivo. Using NVivo, I referred to my second research question (see Section 3.3) and looked for comments relating to the teachers' educational beliefs, the influences of these beliefs and the factors which may have contributed to the ways in which the teachers interpreted and implemented the SBA. I worked with one individual

case at a time; in this way, I was able to construct a full account of each teacher's practices and the underlying factors.

Table 6: A summary how data was analyzed

Research questions	Data-gathering instrument	The proposed data analysis
1) What is the knowledge and pedagogical beliefs of teachers who claim to be implementing SBA, and what do they report as having changed in their assessment practice since the introduction of SBA?	Interviews: semi-structured interviews Audio recording	In transcribing the audio recording, I analysed what was said, how it was said and what was not said. The next step of the analysis was to determine which participants claimed to have an understanding or knowledge and belief of SBA or to have experienced a significant change in practice since its introduction. In order to do this I also summarized each interviews. The summarisation not only helped me to choose the participants for the next step of data collection (namely, observation) but it also allow me to capture what teachers say in regards with SBA.
2) How closely do these changes match those intended in the Malaysian SBA curriculum document?	Observations: participant observation Audio recording Field notes Lesson plans Students' work Assessment instrument Curriculum and assessment document Teachers' journals	Three participants were selected to provide further information regarding the implementation of SBA. These participants were selected based on the information given during the pre-study interview. The observation data were fully transcribed and summarized to provide a detailed account of teachers' practices. I identified which practices characterized primary teachers' implementation of SBA and compared them with those officially recommended. Questions, issues and themes generated by the observational data were produced after each observation. I first reread my transcription data and looked for repetition of activities conducted prior to the teachers' claim of

		<p>conducting assessment in the classroom, I did this manually (by underlining details that indicated a repeated teaching behavior). For example, when the teacher repeatedly did the same activities (memorization, repetition of words) in his/her teaching prior to her classroom assessment, I highlighted this and marked it as repetitive teaching behavior. I then transferred the details to the NVIVO software one by one so they could be organized more effectively. The NVIVO software helped in organizing and categorizing the details of teachers' practices which I had captured manually from my transcription and field notes. From this example, I then themed teachers' repetition activities as teachers' belief about memorization prior to assessment.</p> <p>Later, the teachers were then asked the reasons for such behavior for verification of the chosen theme as discussed in the following row in this table.</p>
3) What contextual factors appear to be affecting the willingness or ability of Malaysian teachers to implement SBA?	<p>Follow-up post-classroom observation interviews: semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Audio recording</p>	<p>Two semi-structured follow-up interviews were carried out.</p> <p>These interviews focused on issues, themes and questions generated from the observational data.</p> <p>In transcribing the audio-recorded interviews, I analysed what the teachers said, how they said it and what was not said. I aimed to retain the meaning of the interviewees' answers to the best of my ability. A member check was applied to verify the accuracy of my translation from Malay to English.</p> <p>To analyse and make sense of the interview data, I reread the data more than once. I referred to my research</p>

		<p>questions and looked for comments related to teachers' educational beliefs, the influences of these beliefs and the factors which may have influenced the ways in which the teachers interpreted and implemented SBA.</p> <p>The interview data was then coded and put into categories. For example, if the data revealed that the teachers' instructional decisions were frequently made in relation to the students (e.g. their abilities, willingness and so on), this was categorised under teachers' beliefs about students.</p> <p>The coding of the interview data was done manually and categorised both manually and assisted with NVivo software.</p>
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3.11 Dealing with the trustworthiness of the study

In any qualitative study, the question of validity and reliability often becomes an issue to the extent that questions are asked about whether any rigour was applied in carrying out the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this concept 'credibility, dependability and transferability'. Internal credibility or validity concerns questions of how the research findings match up to reality, whether they capture what is really happening and whether the study 'hinges on the meaning of reality' (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). Maxwell (2005) argues that one can never really capture reality. He states that:

validity is more a goal than a product: it is never something that can be proven or taken for granted. Validity is also relative: it has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the

research, rather than being a context independent property of methods and conclusions (p. 105).

Ratcliffe (1983) offers an interesting view on assessing validity in every kind of research. It should be remembered, he suggests, that:

- the 'data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter or translator' (p. 149);
- '[o]ne cannot observe or measure a phenomenon/event without changing it, even in physics where reality is no longer considered to be single-faceted' (p. 150) and
- numbers, equations and words 'are all abstracts, symbolic representation(s) of reality, but not reality itself' (p. 150).

Based on the above discussion, validity must be assessed in terms of something other than reality itself (which can never be grasped) by increasing the credibility of the findings. Walcott (2005, p. 160) suggests doing this by 'increas(ing) the correspondence between research and the real world' through what is commonly known as triangulation. Denzin (1978) proposes four types of triangulation, the use of multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings.

For this study, I adopted multiple methods and multiple sources of data to triangulate my findings. The idea of applying multiple methods of data collection refers, for example, to checking what one has been told in an interview against what was observed on site or what has been read in a document which is relevant to the topic of interest. For the classroom observations in which I applied a cross-checked analysis to gain the respondents' views of their own practices, I conducted a follow-up interview

with each of the participants after each observation. I adopted multiple sources of data, for example, comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or places or interview data gathered from people with varying perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same individuals. For example, after analysing the data, rather than just depending on my own interpretation, I returned to each school to have my three participants validate my findings (e.g. agree or disagree with them) and to determine whether they had something further to explain about their own pedagogical beliefs and actions regarding SBA. In other words, I applied a member checking 'dialogic approach', as suggested by Harvey (2014) (the procedure adopted is discussed in the following section). I also conducted a telephone interview (not recorded, as requested) with an education official in the Ministry of Education Malaysia. I asked the person to talk me through the ideas behind the implementation of SBA in the Malaysian primary schools and the importance of SBA implementation, and I ask the individual whether the primary school teachers were implementing the SBA and what the barriers might be in the implementation. The officer in the department was able to provide me with in-depth information about the KSSR primary school curriculum and the SBA. Although I was not able to contact a person from the department which had actually created the SBA policy, I gleaned some valuable information from the officer who agreed to talk to me.

In terms of transferability, the study only represents a small number of primary school English language teachers which started with seven teachers and a focus on three who claim to have the knowledge and pedagogical

beliefs about SBA and their claim to be implementing SBA. Thus, this study may not be generalized in terms of the other population of primary school English language teachers in Malaysia. However, the findings of this study provided an in-depth investigation of three teachers with regards to their practices of SBA as stated in the previous discussion. According to Stake (1994) and Denscombe (1998) although each case maybe unique, it is also an example within broader group and, as a result, they suggest that transferability should not be immediately rejected. Thus, Guba & Lincoln (1985) and Firehouse (1993) suggested that it is the responsibility of the investigator or researcher that sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork is provided to enable such transfer. According to Colorado State University writing guide (1994) transferability is a process performed by *readers* of research. Transferability is when the readers note the specifics of the research situation and compare them to the specifics of an environment or situation with which they are familiar. Therefore, if there are enough similarities between the two situations, the readers may be able to infer that the results of the research would be the same or similar in their own situation or "transfer" the results of a study to another context. From the descriptions above the findings of the study may be transferable in situation that holds the same or similar context as the teachers investigated in the study and based for the following reason:

- As shown in Table 10 and discussed in previous sections, besides depending on the preliminary interviews, classroom observation and post classroom observations interview this study also generated other data from the participants. For example and explained in Section 3.10.2, during the classroom observations to investigate the teachers'

claims in implementing SBA, I spent a month in each school observing school activities, attended school meetings and interviewing other subject teachers, head teachers, assistant head teachers, head of English language panels and used the data to cross-check the teachers' practices of SBA investigated in the study. A month spent in each school had helped me to understand the difficulties and reality behind teachers' implementation of the SBA.

3.11.1 Employing Harvey's 'dialogic approach' for member checking

This approach is based on Harvey's member-checking strategy in communicating participants' stories. Her idea of member checking is derived from Lincoln and Guba's (1985) proposed methodology, that is 'taking ideas back to research participants for their confirmation ... [and/or] to gather material to elaborate your categories' (Charmaz, 2006, cited in Harvey, 2014, p. 26). However, Harvey's dialogic approach goes beyond the method described in Lincoln and Guba and involves participants further in the research process through series of dialogues, thus ensuring the rigour and trustworthiness of the study itself. Harvey's concept was adapted from her reading of Bakhtin's explanation of 'dialogism':

All utterances are *dialogic*, meaning that the past and present meet and co-exist in the utterance. Thus *dialogism* is about the relationship utterances enter into with other utterances; all utterances have a history and a present, and all utterances want to be heard and responded. (2005, p. 23)

Harvey further explains:

Within the utterance is an inherent, dynamic tension between the past and present: so, just as the past shapes the present, the present also shapes the past.

Through this, the individual voice is shaped. No single utterance can be understood separately from its contexts of use. The utterance is an individual act but not a *purely* individual act, as it always springs from what has gone before it. This relation between utterance and response means that all language is dialogic; therefore, language is always *relational*. (2005, p. 23).

As such, during an interview, 'both speakers listen and respond, actively participating in the construction of the stories they bring to each other' (p. 25). This means that through this process, the researcher and the participant reflect and communicate to gain a more in-depth and rich understanding of the participants' stories. In relation to this study, this approach provided me with the opportunity for further in-depth discussions about the teachers' justifications and reasons for their SBA practices. In order for me to take my findings to my participants, I outlined their thoughts in the form of dialogue bubbles (see Appendix V). For each participant, I presented 5–6 themes according to what I had identified with respect to their SBA practices. I made appointments with each of my three participants prior to the member-checking interview. Each interview lasted about 30–40 minutes. In analysing the member-checking interview, I applied the same process as I did with my preliminary and post-observation classroom interviews.

3.11.2 Enhancing trustworthiness

Below, I highlight the process I conducted in enhancing the trustworthiness of the study:

- To maximise the accuracy of the data collected, I recorded both interviews and observations with an mp3 audio recorder.

- To reduce the influence of reactivity (changes in people's behaviour in the presence of others, such as a researcher), I spent a month in each school and focused on just three participants. In my first week, I familiarised myself with the school practices and the person's colleagues. I initiated a preliminary observation of the participant around the middle of the week, and I only began actual observation during the following week.
- The preliminary interviews with Mae, Liz, Su, Daniel and Anne were conducted in the Malay language, to enable them to express themselves more fully concerning the topic at hand; it was the most comfortable language in which to discuss SBA. The preliminary interviews with Chen and Dennis were in English, as this was the language which these two felt most comfortable using. In fact, all my interactions and day-to-day conversations with Chen and Dennis were in English (including emails, WhatsApp texts and so on).
- During the interviews, I tried my hardest not to give my own opinions about the SBA. However, when the teachers started talking, I could not stop myself from expressing my experiences with it or even agreeing with what the participants had to say. For example, when Chen started talking about the way SBA was conducted when it was first introduced to Years One and Two, she asked if I had been in one of the courses. I began telling Chen what my colleague and I did in order to understand SBA. I felt that this conversation might have affected the way Chen conducted her lesson, because she might have thought that I was there to evaluate and judge the criteria she would be observed on. Upon realising this, I became very cautious in terms of what I had to say during the remainder of the interview.
- Data was collected for this study using various methods (preliminary interviews, classroom observation, post-classroom observation interviews). The preliminary interviews provided the basis for the classroom observations, which, in turn, laid the

foundation for the post-classroom observation interviews. These latter interviews allowed me to understand the observational data instead of simply depending on my own interpretation. This range of methods allowed for a complete analysis of the phenomenon under investigation.

- I have thoroughly outlined the design and conduct of the study and the thinking behind it. This allows the reader to understand my actions.
- During my fieldwork, I continuously emailed summaries of the findings from each school to my supervisors at the University of Leeds. I received feedback on each summary, which was crucial in enhancing the quality of the study.
- As my final approach, for data validity and consistency, I adopted Harvey's 'dialogic approach' (as discussed above).

However, the strategies I applied, as mentioned above, did not completely eliminate the effect of my presence during classroom observations. As McDonough and McDonough (1997, p. 110) note, 'any form of observation is going to introduce distortion from normality'. Therefore, my presence inevitably had an influence on the participants and the setting under investigation. For example, during my preliminary observation of Liz, she tried valiantly to control the behaviour of her students in the classroom during the lesson, but after a while, it seemed that they simply could not sit and listen any longer. Some started to move around and make noises while Liz was conducting her lesson. A few walked towards me and started asking what I was doing at the back of the classroom, and they even looked at what I was writing.

3.12 The presentation of data

In presenting the findings, I will make use of the preliminary data, the classroom and post-classroom observations and the member-checking interview as well as personal notes which I managed to capture during my day-to-day interactions with the participants. According to Richards (2003, p. 283), the claims we make are 'judged on the extent to which we are able to support them with adequate evidence that is fairly representative of our set data'.

The data concerns a portrait of three teachers; at the beginning of the findings chapter, I will present profiles of each of their schools. This is to show how these Malaysian public primary schools operate and how SBA is interpreted in a particular school and by the individual participants. I will then proceed to explore their knowledge and beliefs of the Malaysian SBA, the influence it has had on teachers' classroom practices and the educational beliefs affecting teachers' conceptual and practical application of SBA policy. The data, covered in two chapters, will be presented in a way which serves these aims. I will then identify the characteristics governing each teacher's knowledge and pedagogical beliefs of SBA and the extent to which these characteristics influenced how he or she worked during my observations. This will allow me to analyse how their practices correlate with those recommended by the Malaysian primary school SBA and to determine the factors and rationales underlying the way the teachers interpret it. I will also be presenting the data by dealing with each three cases individually. This is to identify how the teachers work with SBA in their respective schools (with

regards to class size, physical condition of the classrooms, etc.) and later in the summary I will conclude some of the similarities and differences of their practices. Table 7, below, shows the list of data generated from my participants and specifically during the study conducted in Liz, Chen and Dennis's schools.

Table 7: Data generated from the participants

Preliminary interview									
Mae			Liz		Su		Daniel		Anna
Length of interview	31:58		40:47		38:15		49:49		47:50
Data generated from 3 selected teachers									
Liz			Chen			Dennis			
Interview	Type of interview	Length of interview	Interview	Type of interview	Length of interview	Interview	Type of interview	Length of interview	
	Preliminary interview	31:58		Preliminary interview	37:42		Notes on meeting	3 pages	
	Post classroom observation 1	09:32		Post classroom observation 1	30:07		Post classroom observation 1	23:43	
	Post classroom observation 2	16:40		Post classroom observation 2	15:46		Post classroom observation 2	19:50	
Classroom observation	Number of observations	Length of audio recording	Classroom observation	Number of observations	Length of audio& video recording	Classroom observation	Number of observations	Length of audio recording	
	Classroom observation 1	49:40		Classroom observation 1	49:52/59:01		Classroom observation 1	59:59	

	(1 hour)			(1 hour)			(1 hour)	
	Classroom observation 2 (1 hour)	48:50		Classroom observation 2 (1 hour)	01:03:04		Classroom observation 2 (1 hour)	55:04
Field notes	Preliminary observation note		Field notes	Preliminary observation note		Field notes	Preliminary observation note	2 pages
	Field note observation 1	3 pages		Field note observation 1	3 pages		Field note observation 1	2pages
	Field note observation 2	3 pages		Field note observation 2	3 pages		Field note observation 2	2pages
Others	Lesson plan with reflections	2	Others	Lesson plan with reflections	2	Others	Lesson plan with reflections	
	Journal	A month journal		Journal	A month journal		Journal	
	Sample of students' assessment task	2		Sample of students' assessment task	2		Sample of students' assessment task	2
	Personal notes	23pages		Personal notes	15pages		Personal notes	15pages

	Schools' Yearly planning	1 set		Schools' Yearly planning	1 set		Schools' Yearly planning	1set
	Summary of preliminary interview, observation	4pages 3pages		Summary of preliminary interview and observation	6pages 4pages		Summary of preliminary interview and observation	3pages 4pages
Other interview	Head teacher	01:01:35	Other interviews	Head teacher	40:05	Other interviews	Head teacher	14:23
	Assistant head teacher	15:15		Assistant head teacher			Assistant head teacher	18:03
	Head of English Panel	19:52		Maths teacher	17:40			

Chapter 4: Liz, Chen and Dennis

In this chapter, I present the work of Liz, Chen and Dennis, in that order. I will show the insights into Liz, Chen and Dennis's knowledge and pedagogical beliefs about SBA from the preliminary interviews I conducted with them. Then I will present their practices and compare these with the practices recommended by SBA, based on the classroom observations and the journals that both Liz and Chen produced and including my personal notes that I took in my day-to-day conversations with Dennis. In my portrayal of these teachers, based on my post-classroom observation interviews with them, I will also discuss both the similarities and differences in terms their assessment practices and beliefs about the SBA and the reasons why these teachers do assessments the way they do.

4.1 Liz

At the time this fieldwork was conducted, Liz had been teaching for 18 years. She did her teacher training for the teaching of English as a second language certificate in 1996 and started her teaching career later that year. Liz said that teaching was her first career of choice, and she applied right after completing her secondary education. As in many other countries, Malaysian teachers were encouraged to develop professionally by upgrading their qualifications to the bachelor's level, and Liz completed her degree in 2010. Liz is a Chinese mixed with one of ethnic groups (a minority group in the Eastern Malaysia).

Liz teaches in a school situated in a village area, approximately six kilometres from the nearest town in the district. Liz said that the students who attended the school were from nearby villages. They were from a minority ethnic group on the east coast of Malaysia, consisting of a mixture of the local communities. The school serves both of these ethnic groups, and the language of communication is the Malay language.

Liz thinks SBA was introduced into Malaysian primary school education because the school education system had been exam-oriented for too long. To her, this also means that the teaching and assessment had been focused more on writing skills than on any other English language elements (e.g. reading and speaking). She says that the pupils' learning in school had been targeted at passing the examination. For her, this kind of system is not effective, because pupils only learn and are taught how to pass exam papers. Liz explains:

To me, the reason SBA, school-based assessment was introduced in school was because before this, we were based on exam-oriented, right, just to pass examination. So maybe those ways are not effective; to me, they learn only to pass examination. (liz/11/06-15/L68-L71)¹

She then added;

¹ All the audio recordings were fully transcribed, and in translating her interview to English language, I aimed to maintain the original meaning as far as possible. Coding of the interview: (participant's name/number of interview conducted/month and year of the interview, the line numbers of transcribed interview) [I = interview; L = Line].

I have done SBA it wants to look at the potential of the students. SBA wants to look at the pupils' potential, right. Each day we look at their potential if they have acquired the skills learnt on that day. (liz/11/06-15/L68-L71-L74)

She meant that the potential in term of the learning skills the pupils need to acquire. She gave an example, if she is teaching the writing component and the pupils are required to achieve certain writing structure, if they are able to write as expected they would be able to move to another writing level and if not she would continue teaching the same level of writing skills. Liz also comments that when SBA was introduced, she felt a bit pressured. But it was now five years since SBA was launched, and for Liz, it had become much easier for her to cope and manage SBA in her daily teaching. Liz says she prefers using worksheets when assessing. She first conducts her teaching and then distributes the tasks to her learners. Then she goes to each desk, monitoring, guiding and helping them with the tasks. She says that she checks every student's work and identifies those who can and cannot do the task. She continues guiding those who are not able to complete the tasks themselves, as she describes it:

I usually use worksheets, you know. I would firstly teach, then later I would distribute the worksheets, like that. If it is a new skill, right, I teach the whole class first. So while they are doing the assessment, I will go and check everyone. (liz/11/06-15/L296-L299)

Liz feels that the change she has experienced since SBA is that her teaching has been much easier and more organised. Lesson planning and searching for teaching materials have also been less difficult for her. She says that she has learned to understand more about her students' learning, which makes it easier for her to approach them and for them to approach her. She explains:

When we conduct SBA right, when I do assessment right, I feel like I know the students more. I am able to know their weaknesses and can see just where are their weaknesses. We can see where the weaknesses are for each individual. So it is easier, you know, to help them and find ways to help them. That is good, I think. (liz/11/06-15/L285-L289)

Liz says that SBA should be conducted on a daily basis, but she also says that it is impossible to complete the skills to be assessed on that particular day; it could take several days, depending on how well her pupils cope with the learning. She conducts SBA in the classroom as an ongoing assessment during her teaching and learning. When I asked whether she implements SBA in the way which was mandated in the SBA document, Liz responded:

Yes I do implement SBA in the classroom. SBA is being implemented. In every teaching, SBA is conducted. There is assessment. (liz/11/06-15/L427-L428)

In order to find out about Liz's SBA practices, I conducted two official classroom observations with her. The unit which Liz was teaching was from Unit 8 in the primary one textbook, 'My Mum', focusing on the writing module (see Figure 1). She used the same topic for both of her lessons, in which she claimed to be conducting her classroom assessment. She was teaching a Year One classroom (age 7, Level One). During one lesson, Liz distributed two different types of assessment (worksheets). One worksheet was for the mainstream pupils, and another was for the LINUS/remedial pupils (those with an inability to read, write or count; i.e. those learners with learning difficulties). The aim of the mainstream tasks was for pupils to rearrange words to form correct sentences. By contrast, the aim for the remedial pupils

was to match sentences to the right pictures. Liz began with the following activity:

Extract 1: (liz/co1/7-15/L171-L181)²

- T: OK, shh....OK now, keep quiet...keep quiet...alright, now you have to do an activity, writing activity...writing, ah...writing. OK, we do some writing activity. OK, Fazli, Syafikah, Nurul, Gerald. Gerald, sit down, sit here. Bring your pencil. Your pencil. Take out your pencil. **(Waiting for Gerald to move and sit in the place she asks him to sit)**
- T: OK, class. Take out your pencil and eraser. Pencil and eraser. Ah Loon! Where is your pencil? Pencil and eraser? **(The teacher also distributes worksheets and gives different worksheets to do for different groups of individuals)**
- T: OK, write your name. Name, your name. Write your name. **(The teacher walks around asking pupils to write their names. The pupils start to complete the task, and the teacher walks around the classroom)**
- T: OK, finish? OK sit down. Sit down...sit down...alright, ok...stop writing. **(Students are standing, walking around the classroom)**

The episode above indicates the preparation Liz did before and during distributing the assessments. The following descriptions show what Liz was doing while her learners were completing the task. These are my notes about what I saw while observing her in this part of the activity (Liz/FN(01)/07-15)³:

² Coding for classroom observation: (participant's name/number of observation/month and year of observation/line number for transcribed classroom observations) [co= classroom observation; L= line].

³ Coding for field notes: (participant's name/number of observation/month and year of notes taken) [FN= field notes] {This coding also applies to MN= meeting notes; journals and personal notes}

Liz goes to the pupils' table, I think making sure they are starting to write. I see three students without worksheets. Liz eventually gives them. Liz goes back to the teacher's table. I see a student go to Liz's table. I notice Liz shows him something and he goes back to his seat. Liz walks around again and I see her taking a worksheet away from a pupil.

Ten minutes later, I could still see Liz walking around the classroom, and during this time I noticed the following:

The pupils could approach Liz easily. I see Liz spending time on the two rows to my right particularly those seating at the back row. I also see some worksheets are still empty (close where I am observing). I hear two pupils asking for permission to go to the toilet. I see Liz is at the left row with two of her pupils and I see another two pupils joined in. Then Liz moved back to the teacher's table. Four boys came to approach her.

Fifteen minutes later, I saw this:

Pupils continuously came to Liz. I also see some pupils are trying to send their work. I see Liz sent them back again to do some corrections. I hear Liz saying to add full stops to their sentences. While Liz was busy with the other pupils (pupils surrounding her), I see a boy climbing the other side of his desk to borrow a pencil. I see Liz walking to the right row tables and collecting the worksheets. I see some pupils move to their friend's table asking to help them with the worksheet. Liz walks back to her table to organise the worksheet she had just collected.

From the three above descriptions, it can be seen that Liz moved around the classroom frequently, from one row of the tables to the other. I also noticed that Liz might spend more time on a particular learner, but each time she did so, almost half of the class were surrounding her. Liz collected the worksheets from the pupils if they had done everything correctly and returned those which needed corrections. Once corrections had been made,

she would also take them in. The assessment which Liz conducted showed that she focused more on the writing element of English language skills.

The English language curriculum for speaking skills aims to equip pupils to communicate with peers and adults confidently and appropriately in formal and informal situations. However, in both of Liz's lessons which I observed, the English language was a one-way interaction, because the pupils were not able to produce the language in a communicative way, as shown in the following extracts. In addition, her practices in the classroom did not show that the communicative component of the language was being assessed during the teaching and learning (e.g. using checklists, observational sheets).

Extract 3: (liz/co1/07-15/L98-L117)

T: We start *ah*. This—
P: This—
T: is—
P: is—
T: my—
P: my—
T: mum.
P: mum.
T: Class, read.
P: This-is-my-mum.
T: OK, class read. 1-2-3.
P: This-is-my-mum.
T: OK, good.
P: This-is-a-mug.
T: OK, again. Ok, 1, 2, 3, read.
P: This-is-a-mug.
T: OK, number 3.
P: This-is-a-mat.
T: Good. Number 4.
P: This-is-a-moon.

I also noticed that in both of Liz's lessons, she taught the reading component of the English language by asking the pupils to repeat continuously after her, from introducing the vocabularies to the introduction of the sentence pattern.

When I asked Liz about the text used in her lesson, she said she had been using the same text since the early week of school. In both of Liz's lessons, she used short sentences to describe a picture or story. The lesson showed that the text Liz used in her lesson was to reinforce the pupils' learning in preparing them for the written assessment to be conducted later on during the lesson.

I then conducted a post-classroom observation interview with Liz and asked about the actions I described earlier. During both of Liz's lessons and assessments, she relied upon worksheets to measure the progress of her learners in the topic she taught. Liz says that using worksheets in the classroom for her assessment helps her to gauge her learners' performance much more quickly. She also says that using worksheets is the easiest way she knows to conduct the assessment simultaneously with all the learners in the class. For Liz, using the worksheets gives her the opportunity to move around the classroom checking her pupils' work and to reteach any misunderstood concepts as her learners are working. She says that this gives her learners an active and responsible role in the learning and assessment process.

I prefer using worksheets so I can get the result easily and to know whether my learners are able to understand what had been taught. (liz/14/07-15/L31-L33)

She went on:

Once I have given them the worksheets, I will guide each individual, and those who still cannot answer correctly, I will make them to do corrections. It does take longer to assess those weaker ones, but those OK ones, they get extra worksheets to do. This helps

me to know if they had really understood what had been learned. (liz/14/07-15/L38-L43)

When I further discussed Liz's intention in using worksheets in the classroom, she said it was also to scaffold and support the pupils during their learning process. This was the process where she could tailor her teaching to the needs of her pupils and help them achieve their learning goals. The learners were why the worksheet was one of the predominant tools used for assessment in Liz's classroom:

I would really like if all of them can finish doing the assessment at the same pace. I also hope that all of them are able to answer or complete the task without leaving anyone behind. I'm trying to avoid that.
(liz/14/07-15/L45-L47)

To Liz, worksheets are tools she employs as the best method in her classroom to monitor her learners' progress. She does not use any other method of assessment, as recommended in the SBA document. For her, the use of worksheets as a tool for assessment can be successful if the teacher thoughtfully plans their use and takes into consideration where the students currently are and where the teacher can take them in their learning.

Another practice which seemed to be noticeable in Liz's lesson before the assessment was conducted was her drilling activities (listen-repeat). Liz did a lot of repetition of words, phrases and sentences. She says it is important to repeat and revise what has been learned, so the learners can remember and memorise. Later, during the assessment, they can easily answer the questions:

To me it is important and I must do repetition of words so they would easily remember when they are doing the assessment. It would be easier for them to answer the questions later on. (liz/14/07-15/L12-L13)

She also believes that through the repetition activity, her learners will eventually be able to read independently. To her, memorisation is a necessary precondition of understanding, and this is what helps her learners with their assessment task:

I want them to be able to know and to pronounce the word and to really recognise the shape of it. So it would be easier for them when they are to read without any guidance. (liz/14/07-15/L23-L25)

As stated earlier, with respect to Liz's actions, the use of the English language was dominant in the classroom. This is a way for Liz to get her learners to be able to function in the communicative skill of the language:

We use simple English language every day in the classroom so that the learners are used to it. That's how I get my learners to favour the learning of the English language in the classroom. When the learners constantly hear the language being spoken, like, the word 'finish', for example, is a word that they are used to now. (liz/14/07-15/L52-L56)

She continues:

There is improvement when we speak in the English language in our lessons. They eventually will understand even though it is difficult. (liz/14/07-15/L56-L57)

Guessing a particular word, phrase or sentence or even guessing the name of a picture was also a key characteristic of Liz's speaking assessment practices. She calls an individual to the front of the class to guess pictures or words which she has pasted on the board. Liz's opinions about speaking assessments also seem to influence her practices:

I usually ask two questions, and if they are able to answer correctly, I consider that they had achieved the speaking component. For the speaking assessment, if we ask questions, they can answer, then to me, they are speaking. We ask questions to encourage them to speak. That's how I do it to assess the speaking skills. (liz/11/06-15/L322-L327)

Liz's beliefs about using the English language during her teaching and asking her learners to guess particular words or pictures are the way she believes her practices of speaking assessment should be done and how her learners may acquire the language.

Additionally, in the lesson I observed and as stated earlier that Liz moved around often in the classroom, monitoring and looking at individual work while the students were doing their assessment task. Monitoring, guiding and giving immediate feedback are important key characteristics of the Malaysian primary school SBA, and her action matched this recommended aspect of SBA. When I asked Liz her reasons for doing this, she said:

I move around to look if they are doing the task, they are reading and if they are answering the task correctly. Sometimes I will immediately tell of their mistakes and make them do the corrections. (liz/13/07-15/L13-L16)

Another important aspect of the Malaysian SBA is the scoring of pupils' progress, through either formative or summative assessment. When I asked Liz her opinion on both of these matters, she said:

Usually, summative assessment is examination, right. It's an examination system, right. I will do summative every three times a year. We will do three times a year for summative, March, May and October. (liz/11/07-15/L379-L381)

Although Liz claims to be implementing SBA, her opinion about formative assessment was not as I expected. She offered the opinion that formative assessment is mainly a test, and her school does not give tests but mostly does summative assessments instead. Then I asked what these summative assessments were which they conducted, and she said this usually involved certain topics from discussions with the rest of the Year One teachers. The discussions involved topics they had taught, and these would be used in the summative assessment.

I began asking about the scoring of SBA. I asked about what they did with the results from the summative assessment. Liz gave a long, descriptive answer to this question. She said that they set the summative test to give two types of results. She gave an example in her explanation below:

For instance, the first questions in the test papers we will write below the question what 'band' it is trying to get the learners to achieve. So when we check the paper and it is answered correctly, we will tick inside the box. Then we will also give marks in a form of percentages. The percentage marking is to get what grade the students are getting from the test. The band is just for the teachers themselves to keep. The percentage is for the school to know how many students passed the test and how many did not.
(liz/11/07-15/L395-L401)

I asked Liz about the SBA 'Band system', as mentioned and described in Section 1.4.1. She said the summative assessment was meant to provide an indication of whether the student had completely achieved the intended skills, although continuous assessment was conducted in the classroom. She gave another long, descriptive answer to explain how this SBA band system worked in her school:

Sometimes they are able to do in the classroom with guidance, but during summative assessment, there is no more guidance, right. Usually the only thing we help them with is the instructions. Sometimes they can answer, because they have seen the question before. It is because we want them 100% to achieve the band, and if they don't, we will reteach, and it does inform us which of the students needed more and continuous guidance. (liz/13/07-15/L405-L414)

It seems that during summative assessment, Liz would produce similar questions for her learners to do (questions that she had tested before during her classroom assessments). It seems that Liz still depends on summative assessments to gauge her learners' performance. The grading and scoring of student performance, as seen in the discussion above, reveals that Liz and her school still rely entirely on the results of the summative assessment to gauge the learners' progress.

To Liz, SBA is a form of assessment which seeks to improve learners' potential. She adds that SBA helps in identifying whether or not an individual learner is able to achieve the required skills being taught to them during the lesson. She feels that SBA is good both for the learners and the parents, because as she says, it allows the parents to see their children's achievements in a particular skill. To her, this means that parents not only get to see their children's achievement in writing skills, as is always seen in examinations, but in all the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). She also believes that the pupils in her school seem to enjoy learning with SBA in the system.

The pupils act as though they like learning more. Sometimes the students would ask 'Teacher, will we learn again tomorrow?' so we can see the interest wanting to learn. It is a way to attract the pupils in

learning the English language. (liz/11/06-15/L267-L264)

Liz also finds that with SBA, teaching and assessing become easier. To her it has made it easier for her to look for teaching resources. She also feels that it is easier for her to find ways to help and guide each individual in her classroom. Liz reports that she also writes her assessment results in the form of reflections at the end of her lesson plan book and also writes scores at the back of the book (which are not required to be recorded in the system; see to the Appendix J and K on the lesson plan). This helps her decide how to plan the next teaching and which learners need more attention.

Before leaving Liz's school to conduct my fieldwork with Chen, I requested that for a month, Liz write a weekly journal about her assessment practices. In her journal, she wrote in short sentences about issues she encountered during her assessment, the analysis of the assessment which she conducted and her suggestions for overcoming problems she is facing. The focus of her issues was mainly on the writing component of the English language. There was no indication in her journal that she had conducted any speaking assessment activities during her lessons. She focused entirely on the writing skills, and I noticed only a little evidence that reading skills were being assessed.

A year later, I returned to Liz's school to present to her what I had gathered from my case study with her. This visit was also to get her to validate my interpretation of her case with SBA, other than just having me theorising about her practices. Other than that, I wanted to know whether she had

additional things to say regarding her practices. In other words, it was to get her more involved in the study and to present her own story (as discussed in Section 3.10).

I presented Liz's practices in the form of dialogue bubbles (see this sample in Appendix V). I had categorised five themes about Liz's SBA practices. During the meeting, Liz expressed her agreement with my findings:

I have no comment. This is what we have discussed
and I have no further comment. This is how I do it.
(liz/pv/08-16/L2-L3)

I began asking for further confirmation from her on the five themes I had developed as well as hoping for her to elaborate on my interpretation of the data. I asked further, because when Liz said, 'I have no further comment. This is how I do it', her reaction was so certain and so convincing that it almost prevented me to ask for further explanation. Although I tried my very best to build more than just 'a researcher and a participant' kind of relationship by getting the teachers to be more involved in the study, her comments made me wonder whether my status as a researcher might still be affecting and influencing the way the teachers felt about the whole process of the study. Perhaps, to Liz, I was still just an intruder who came asking all these questions about her practices. Further to her comment, my influence could be the reason she used 'we' in the beginning, instead of 'I', when she made her statements. This means that no matter how hard we try to lessen the reactivity between the researcher and the participant, we cannot avoid the fact that we are still outsiders to them and that we influence what they do and say and what we expect to hear.

Liz then finally said more about her assessment activities, the scoring and reporting as well as the monitoring system for SBA. She said she had changed a few things in the way she conducted her assessment for the current year. This was because she had a different group of Year 1 students. This year, she was given a class which were mostly better learners than her previous classroom; a few of them needed more attention, but most of them were good. She said that she would have to give extra activities for the good ones to do while she attended to the ones who needed further guidance. This also meant that Liz still relied on the use of worksheets in conducting her assessment.

When I asked whether she conducted repetition, drilling and revision activities with her new classroom, she answered that she did, but later, she noticed that they got bored with the activity, so she needed to create a variety of activities to get her learners interested in learning the English language. This also meant that Liz would give different set of assessments to each different group of learners. This means that she provides individualized assessment for the group which she identifies that pick up quickly in the lesson and another different set of questions to those who does not :

I give different sets of assessment for these few groups of pupils. In my previous class, they get all the same papers. I tried the same before, giving them the same assessment, but the good ones turn up to finish early, and they get bored, probably because the worksheet was too easy for them. When I added a few more sentences for them to rearrange without teaching, they couldn't do it. They also need a bit of guidance. (liz/pv/08-16/L43-L49)

I then asked Liz to explain to me more about the scoring and recording of the assessments conducted in the classroom. Liz considered the scoring and recording using the 'band system' (for Level 1; see explanation in Section 1.4.1) to be difficult for her. She explained that some topics were difficult, labelled as band 1 achievements. She would usually skip these kinds of topics and used the easiest topics for the pupils to achieve the band 1 level. She explained:

Let say from January to March uhh...my pupils had already achieved band 1 for this particular topic; later in April he/she is unable to achieve band 1 for this other topic that I had taught. So I would just leave it, but I still teach the topic. They can and are able to achieve, but a bit slow, I would say. (*liz/pv/08-16/L94-L98*)

I asked Liz further if it was possible for any of her pupils to achieve band 6 (the highest level of achievement) for SBA. Liz explained that since she had been teaching and assessing, none of her pupils had ever achieved band 6. She said that no one ever asked or monitored the pupils' SBA achievements:

I think the SBA that we do in the classroom is never used for reporting. They [the government officers] usually use the examination result to report the school and pupils' achievements. They prefer the grades like A, B and C. They prefer using percentages. Even the parents prefer this scoring. No one ever looks at the band system for SBA. I feel it is just a waste of time doing two assessments. (*liz/pv/08-16/L119-L125*)

Even so, Liz mentioned that she would still continue to do classroom assessment. To her, the reason for continuing to do classroom assessment is not only to prepare herself for the officers who may come to visit and monitor the implementation. She likes continuing her classroom assessment,

because it helps her to evaluate her own teaching and helps to identify her learners, particularly those who need further assistance and guidance in learning, as she explains:

I don't keep the scoring and recordings of SBA just for the officers to see when they come to visit and monitor the implementation. If I don't keep a record in any of my classroom assessments, I would just be honest to them. I usually keep my record in my teaching plan book. That's all. I assess my students to know where they are at in their learning. (*liz/pv/08-16/L141-L145*)

This means Liz records the results of her assessments in the form of reflections at the end of her lesson plan book, to monitor her learners' growth, a practice recommended by the ministry. She does classroom assessment not just to please the officers to see but doing it to help her learners' learning progress and to help in her teaching. Before I ended the conversation, Liz further added that since the introduction of SBA, it had not been carefully monitored; nor was there any emphasis on teachers doing assessments in the classrooms. The examination was preferred as the method for scoring and reporting. But to her, SBA is a good system. She prefers SBA over examinations, because she feels comfortable and has been used to doing classroom assessment for her own teaching and her pupils' learning:

I don't believe in scores that the students get through examination, because it is not ourselves who monitor them during that time. They may cheat and copy and may get higher scores. I prefer SBA. We get to see their progress. I will continue doing it in my classroom. It seems like a routine now. (*liz/pv/08-16/L165-L173*)

Summary

Liz assesses her pupils by giving many conventional types of worksheets (e.g. matching sentences to pictures, mostly filling in the gap) to the students, one worksheet after another. Her teaching method is somehow conventional too (repetition, memorisation, drilling). The way she conducts her lessons without group work and focusing on the teacher-to-student approach indicates her traditional and conventional preference of teaching and assessment. There are parts of Liz's assessment practice that are as intended in SBA (guiding, giving instant feedback in the form of corrective feedback). Her assessment practice is also more focused on the writing component, because evidently, she believes that she has other ways to deal with both the reading and speaking assessments.

4.2 Chen

Chen had been teaching for eight years at the time the study was conducted. She started her teaching career in 2006, ten years later than Liz. During the study, Chen was also undergoing her bachelor education through distance learning. She speaks fluently in Chinese, Malay and the English language. The school in which Chen is teaching is a Chinese-type primary school; therefore, the language used for teaching is Chinese, except for Malay and English language subjects. According to Chen, the students who attend the school are either Chinese mixed with other ethnic groups or non-Chinese (of other ethnicities whose parents want their children to be taught in this school).

Unlike Liz, Chen had been appointed by the District Education Department as one of the KSSR English language curriculum Year Four trainers in 2013, and as discussed in Section 1.3.1, KSSR was introduced alongside SBA in 2011. Chen says that it took her a few years to understand what the KSSR English language curriculum meant and what the curriculum intended the teachers to do with SBA. Therefore, as it was for her in the beginning, she feels that other teachers may also have problems in coping with and understanding it. This could also mean that Chen was exposed to the new English language curriculum and SBA only during the training and was then expected to train other English language teachers in her district. Chen explains SBA somehow differently from how Liz does. Her understanding of SBA is that it is not a new thing in the education system but that it was applied long before it was enforced in the system. Chen thinks that the reason it is difficult for the teachers to implement SBA is that:

They don't want to do extra work, because in the old system, it's easy, right, you have four tests a year. Maybe five tests if you must, and then you just do your exercise regularly. You don't need to record any SBA, you don't have to record elsewhere. You don't have to submit a trans record every three months. So I don't think they want the work, because they think that SBA is all about clerical work. (*chen/11/07-15/L63-L69*)

To Chen, SBA is easy; she says that doing SBA is just like getting the learners to do simple exercises on the board and recording their progress. She thinks that other teachers still seem to think that SBA is another formal test conducted in the classroom (as discussed with respect to Liz's opinion of formative assessment):

These teachers still thinking that SBA means 'test', formal paper pen test. And you cannot give prop. Of

course you can. If you feel your pupils even weak, why not give them pictures. Give them pointers. (chen/11/07-15/L95-L98)

She said that the worksheets used in the classroom are considered part of SBA. According to her, the assessment can also include just listing some items or asking the students to categorise. She explained further how she conducts SBA. She said, for example, that if she has taught the students to write a message to somebody in a unit, she will ask them also to write a message in another following unit, but with a different kind of purpose, and later, she will add some length to expand it. For the remedial learners, she will ask them to do some corrections, and she believes that after the second exercise, they will be able to do much better. An example of her explanation is shown below:

SBA means, uhm...even the worksheets that you give at the end of a topic or particular topic. For example, if English uh...you've learned, let's say, countable and uncountable nouns in topic one. And then when you teach your pupils, you feel that they are not ready to be tested yet. So you don't test them yet. (chen/11/07-15/L80-L84)

Chen says that she implements SBA as it is recommended for her to do. She says that SBA can help learners to learn independently and that it enables them to explore ways in which thing can be done (e.g. in completing particular tasks on their own). She says that since SBA, she feels more like a facilitator to her learners:

So, right now I feel more like a facilitator. I'm not the one who keeps pushing them, who keeps giving them things to learn. I want them to learn more. (chen/11/07-15/L264-L266)

In order to know how Chen handled her SBA practices, I conducted two official classroom observations with her. Chen was teaching a Year Five classroom (age 11, Level Two) in my observations with her. Both of Chen's lessons were on the theme, 'World of Stories'. The first lesson she taught was part of the language arts module in the KSSR English language curriculum. The language arts component aims for the student to be able to appreciate and demonstrate an understanding of an English language literary or creative work for enjoyment. The assessment should relate closely to this aim. The assessment activity Chen conducted was for each pupil to choose a favourite character and provide a justification of his or her choice. The following excerpt shows an example of how Chen conducted her assessment activity:

Extract 1: (chen/co1/08-15/L543-L570)

- T: OK, now you have described these four characters that you think are most interesting from this book. Now, what I want you to do is your favourite character. You are going to name my favourite character from the book is Jules, Jules' new teacher, Anastasia, Mr. Gelatti. You are going to say, I like Jules, Jules' new teacher, Anastasia or Mr. Gelatti, why, because? You can use all those words that you have learned earlier to describe all these characters. Can you do it now? **(The teacher looking at her watch)**. At 8, I will be going to collect this, OK. **(The teacher distributes her template for the next tasks)**. OK think of who you are going to choose? Choose one character. One character. **(The pupils are completing the tasks)**
Chen walks around to look at how the pupils are doing. A pupil came to ask. Chen says,
- T: My favourite character is...? You can even write about the character that is not described earlier. Maybe you like 'Yuv', because you think she is pretty and you like Japanese. You can even write about 'mum'. You can even write about 'grandma', but the reasons are all up to you. You can use the words that I have

provided there, that I have written down and we have discussed earlier. Or you can add on your own idea. You can add *sendiri (yourself)*. **While students are doing the task, the teacher pastes the previous work on the pupils' corner on the right-hand side of the class. Then she starts going around the class again. A pupil shows her work to her. The teacher takes a look. Chen explains;** Why is she being a good teacher? *Kenapa dia cikgu yang bagus? (Why she is a good teacher?)* You think that she is a good teacher? Explain more, and then why do you think she is magical?

During the assessment, I saw Chen distribute colourful decorated templates (see Appendix T) for her pupils to do their writing activities. Chen also continued walking around the classroom and looked at each individual's work, commenting and giving suggestions and ideas of what to write. Just like Liz, in both of Chen's lessons, she focused on assessing the writing skills more than on any of the other skills (e.g. speaking and reading). However, after the writing session, Chen gave her pupils the chance to share their pieces of writing with the others in the classroom. This shows that Chen's practices seem to match the aim of the English language curriculum, that is, to demonstrate an understanding of the English language literary work by giving her pupils the opportunity to share their personal work with the rest of the classroom. Nevertheless, I could not see that this part of the activity was being assessed or recorded by Chen for the learners who presented their work. The extract below shows how she conducts the activity:

Extract 3: (chen/co1/08-15/L651-L666)

- T: OK, Fariz, you will be the first one to share your writing. Fariz, OK, stand up. Come on.
P: Teacher, apa itu clever? (what is clever?)
T: Pandai (clever)
Fariz: My favourite char...

- T: Character
- Fariz: ...character from the book is Anastasia Olivetti. I like Anastasia Olivetti, because is very beautiful. She is famous author. She is humble and friendly. Anastasia Olivetti is very nice too.
- T: Very nice one. Very good. OK, next one.

In the second lesson in which I observed Chen, she was teaching Unit 12 from the English language textbook, focusing on the writing module of the English language curriculum. In Chen's lesson, she made use of technology as one of her assessment tools. In this part of the classroom observation, she incorporated the use of Padlet in her lesson. According to Chen, Padlet is a wall where anyone can post ideas, pictures or videos without having to sign in to the application. This application can be used and seen by anyone to whom she has provided the link by which to enter the programme. Chen says that Padlet is a user-friendly programme. Her practices match the recommended aim of the writing component of the English language curriculum.

There is evidence in both of Chen's lessons of her demonstrating to pupils how to read a story aloud in an interesting way. She said that reading using the correct intonation helps make the reading much more meaningful for her students, so she also had some of her students read with the correct, appropriate intonation. Below are some examples of how Chen demonstrated the reading of the story:

- Extract:** (chen/co1/08-15/L72-L94)
- T: **(the teacher gave an example with intonation).** *"Girl! mum called"*.
- P: **(still reading in her tone)** *"Girl! mum called"*.
- T: No, that's not how your mum is going to call you. OK, sit down. Jerry show me how your mum calls you.

Jerry: **(Stood up and ask the teacher by pointing to his reading book).** Here?

T: Yes, go.

Jerry: 'I thought and thought, but it was so complicated. Girl! My mum called, have you started your homework, yet?'

T: Still can be better. A bit better. OK. **(Then the teacher demonstrated how to read the exact intonation she wanted of the lines in the story to the class).**

"Girl! Have you started you homework yet? Homework? We had to write about the pet we would most like to write. Any pet? Could it? Could it? Could that possibly come true too? What if I told that I would like to have a horse. A horse? I could do better than that. What about an elephant or a crocodile? Or even, oh, wow! A dinosaur."

(I see the pupils are laughing, hearing the way the teacher is reading and Chen trying explaining the reason to read like so)

As in Liz's lesson, Chen used the English language as a medium of instruction in her classroom. She says that in this primary level education, it is important to develop the pupils' speaking as well as their listening skills. She believes that her learners should be experiencing the language more.

I conducted a post-classroom observation interview with Chen in order to understand the reasons behind her actions. The first thing I noticed about Chen's assessment practice was her use of colourful and decorative templates, so I asked why she used these when her students did the writing activities:

So they feel that they are not doing assessment. The pupils don't feel threaten by the assessment term hanging over their head. (*chen/11/07-15/L245-L250*)

Her action is also influenced by a belief about how the students will respond to the way she presents the activity:

So I tried to put activity in a way so that they are feeling like they are just doing like any other task that they do, that they have done. (*chen/12/08-15/L82-L83*)

Another aspect that I noticed during the writing assessment was that Chen used teacher-talking time to give prompts or guiding questions. She believed that these would provide her learners with ideas about what to write in the assessment activity she had given to them. When I asked Chen why guiding the learners was so important to her, she said:

Because for most of the curriculum for SJK is under 'with guidance', it's the catch 'with guidance' at the description, so I would sometimes be more open to giving them guidance. In terms of giving some words they don't know how to spell, maybe words that they know in Malay their own language but they don't know how to translate it in English. (*chen/12/08-15/L98-L102*)

Chen went on to say that the purpose of assessment is the following:

Do not let the students feel the pressure of having the assessment on their head. So, you really need to really play the role. Basically, you can do it like I did, or maybe be more rigid, don't give them any guidance at all, but I would prefer to give them guidance along the way. They just write and answer on their own. (*chen/12/08-15/L89-L93*)

Similarly, Chen's frequent movement around the classroom while her learners were completing their assessment task was the way in which she was also guiding and facilitating her learners. She said:

Because I want to make sure they understand what I am writing. If even I try to make myself clear all the time, every time they tend to do their group work or their individual work, they tend to misunderstand me. So even the best of plans, right, we can only plan. So teachers should really move around the class and monitor students' activities. You need to do that, because you never know if one group going to misinterpret your instructions. (*chen/12/08-15/L325-L332*)

She believes that with SBA, the learners are taught to become independent learners, and the teachers are to help them to explore learning. She says that the teacher is just more like a facilitator, guiding and facilitating them throughout their learning process. She associates SBA with a Chinese proverb:

So maybe at the end of the day, you just show them the door, they need to open the door and go through the door themselves. It's like the Chinese proverb, right, you can feed 'a man for one day if you give him a fish, give him a hook, teach them to fish, they can fish for life'. (*chen/11/07-15/L 266-L270*)

Throughout Chen's assessment, she used this view about the way to present an assessment activity, prompting and guiding learners while they were putting their thoughts into writing, and most of all, not making the learners feel pressured from being assessed. Guiding and facilitating the learners throughout their assessment activity is a key characteristic in the Malaysian primary school SBA, and this seems to match Chen's practices.

Apart from guiding and facilitating, I noticed that in her second lesson, Chen also included the use of Padlet in assessing the writing activities and writing skills of her students. This interest in using technology in her classroom assessment was developed when she was required to incorporate technology into her teaching practice at the university where she was doing part-time study. She thinks that using Padlet is much easier and feels that after the third attempt to use it in the classroom, her learners have become more at ease in using the technology. She also says, of her interest in the technology:

I was very interested to try Padlet with my students to see how well they adapt to this technology. I mean, they are used to 'YouTube' they are used to 'WeChat', and all. I was wondering how well they can cope with this kind of learning-related software where they are controlled by me. (*chen/12/08-15/L98-L101*)

When I asked Chen whether using Padlet is a good way to teach and assess writing skills, she said:

It's a good way of teaching them writing is not only on pen and paper but in other ways also, other forms as well. (*chen/12/08-15/L148-L149*)

She went on:

So it's very relaxing as the teacher, because you can sit there and just watch them do and give them the feedback straightaway. (*chen/12/08-15/L158-159*)

As the Malaysian English language curriculum encourages primary school teachers to use a variety of media and tools for assessment or teaching, Chen's practices seem ideally to match this aim.

Recording the learners' achievements is another important aspect of the Malaysian SBA. Chen commented about this, saying that SBA assesses the learners' capabilities in what they have been learning only in that particular year, and they will be assessed with other achievements in another year. To her, this means that the marks or achievements of the current year will not be carried forward to the next year. Each year will be a whole new achievement for the learners. I asked Chen more about recording her pupils' assessment activities, and she explained:

Since I told you that my school has dual live, right. We have the exams as well. We have one mid-term in March and then another one in May, and we have another mid-term in August or September, and

another one in October. So that is just for formal marking and records for our school. For myself, SBA uhm...I tend to test them after teaching once or twice the same thing. (*chen/11/07-15/L213-L217*)

Chen went on to mention that she records her students' assessments in which she gives a particular task (e.g. creating their own food label) and then later asks them to present their work to the whole class. She records this activity in her own personal recording book (in the form of a reflection similar to Liz's practice and recommended by the ministry) and then keys the information into the offline system.

They present, and then afterwards, I will record it in my trans record, and then I key into my template. (*chen/11/08-15/L230-L231*)

Besides scoring and grading, Chen says that what is most important is the effort the learners put into doing the task. She considers this to be good enough for her. One example was when Chen conducted her writing assessment in Padlet, where the learners were to write their version of the story of the milkman, and there were discussions among her learners, as I saw during the lessons. Chen commented on this:

I think it promotes the collaboration among themselves. They work together. They are producing the story. Actually, their stories are not the same. Some of them even use different ending. So one boy was saying that the milkman would actually die because nobody was helping. So it promotes collaborating each other, cooperating together in order to achieve the same common goal, to write a story for me. So I like that atmosphere. I want them to talk to each other, although it's not probably in English, but for me, as long as they are working for that goal if they want to write me a story. They know what is the aim, what they must do, so at the end of the day, it is enough. (*chen/13/08-15/L213-L22*)

Chen's beliefs about the learners' putting in effort to write, to read or to answer given questions play an important role in the way she feels that assessment is all about giving certain kinds of attention to the learners when they are trying to contribute, both in their participation in the classroom and in trying to complete a task:

Some may say that they are not good in doing tests, but they are doing well in their classroom task. When I ask them to write and when I ask them to read, when I asked them to answer questions, although their answer me in Malay language or using broken English to answer me, at least they are still trying, and I think it's very important that you show them, appreciate actually, what they are saying. So being a teacher, you should really appreciate whatever the pupil is trying to contribute. (*chen/13/08-15/L186-L193*)

This view is based on Chen's opinion that participation means learning. Chen views participation as an important element in developing the class, because she thinks it helps her to know whether the pupils understand a topic and also because it helps her to evaluate her pupils' progress. She offered this view when I asked why she sometimes calls a particular learner and asks him or her to contribute, volunteer and share their opinion or work in the classroom. She says:

If they are too quiet, I'm worried that they are with me or they are drifting off somewhere or falling asleep, or I'm afraid sometimes they seem that they have a nice idea but they are too shy to speak up. (*chen/12/08-15/L196-L199*)

Consequently, to Chen, doing SBA is much easier than giving exams. She says preparing for SBA is easy, and it is not like setting up for an examination paper. She also believes that with SBA, the pupils can be assessed only when they are ready to be tested:

And when you teach your pupils and you feel that they are not ready to be tested yet, so, you don't test them yet. Maybe later, when you encounter another same topic and you can reteach countable and uncountable nouns, and you feel that your pupils are ready for assessment, then you assess. (*chen/11/07-15/L83-L87*)

Before leaving Chen, I requested that she write a weekly journal while I left for my fieldwork in Dennis's school. From her four weekly journal entries, three of Chen's assessments focused on the writing component of the English language. The first week after I left her school, her journal indicates that Chen conducted listening and speaking assessment activities. On the last week of the journal, she wrote about how busy she was with her pupils' examination manuscript. She also mentioned her concern about the latest national primary school examination format in 2016. It was mostly about the writing component of the examination and how she said that she needed to teach her pupils to learn to write without much guidance. She wrote:

I need to find a way to ask them to write without much guidance. UPSR⁴ for them is coming soon. I cannot let them get used to getting from me most of the time. I guess that is my challenge next year. (*chen/journal4/10-15*)

Similar to Liz's case, I returned a year later to Chen's school with the same purpose and intention. I had categorised six themes about Chen's SBA practices from the interviews, classroom observations and post-classroom observation interview I conducted with her (see Appendix V). Among the themes which Chen expressed first was giving prompts and guiding

⁴ Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (National Primary School Achievement Test).

questions during her assessment. She hardly noticed that she gave a lot of prompts and guiding questions to her previous Year Five pupils (Level Two) while they were completing the assessment. She thinks that this strategy has helped her students to work independently now that they are in Year Six (the final year for primary school Level Two).

My pupils are getting better in expressing their ideas although they have some kind of problem putting down their words. Sometimes they use funny spellings, you know, they would spell the words in Malay, and it's very funny but actually they have the ideas. At least they are trying and how to say that a few very few of them are submitting empty papers. Those fully writing sections, the filling in the blanks, at least they are attempting something. It's like some of it paid off. That helps them so much. (*chen/pv/08-16/L10-L16*)

When I asked about the scoring and reporting of SBA which I mentioned in my findings, Chen explained more about the marking and scoring system for the Year 6 new National Examination English language papers instead. The reason might have been because her previous Year 5 pupils would be sitting for the national exam in September this year. I started to focus her attention on the scoring and reporting of SBA which she had reported in my findings. She said:

Yes, yes. We continue the KSSR ideology of assessing throughout the year. Formative assessing. (*chen/pv/08-16/L44-L45*)

Chen continued to explain that the Year Six formative assessment stops in August, because the pupils' Year Six achievements need to be compiled and printed out. The SBA and UPSR results will be taken to their secondary school.

Chen said more about what had changed in SBA since it was introduced in the Malaysian primary school; throughout the implementation of SBA, teachers had also been experiencing changes made to it. In particular, Chen discussed the new scoring for the Year Six exam English language papers. They have changed from an online to an offline recording system. Also, the curriculum documents had previously been separated from the assessment document, but now, starting from Year Four (Level Two), both documents have been integrated into one. Then Chen explained about the students' work which used to be kept as evidence:

Since the DSKP introduction, I think when we started Year 4 for KSSR, it changes. So basically, you can use your regular exercise book as your evidence, or you could use your test as evidence, and you don't have to keep it, actually. You can give it back to the students. And let's say the officers come to visit or monitor the implementation, and they want you to prove, it's actually up to the teacher to defend his or her decision why you gave him Level 3. (*chen/pv/08-16/L50-L55*)

Chen continued discussing the use of technology in her assessment, one of the findings I had discovered and categorised. She said that she still believes that using technology (Padlet) is good, but since 2016, Chen's school had been moved to another area and into a new building. She explained that the computer room still needed some setting up, which also meant that since moving to a new school, Chen had not been using Padlet as part of her assessment activities.

At the end of my meeting with Chen, she talked about the UPSR (National Exam for Year Six) being centralised and whether SBA could be part of the

grades to be added into the UPSR. In a way, she added, teachers would be more responsible for their pupils' learning:

At this moment, 100% from the centre based on the UPSR marks. Although I said that they have to take the SBA up to high school, but they don't actually take the marks into UPSR. It really doesn't affect their marks in the UPSR. I would love it if they have it. Teachers would be able to do it. So it means that the teachers would be very responsible when they're doing their assessment. They cannot just simply give their assessment scores. (*chen/pv/08-16/L117-L122*)

Summary

Chen likes giving her learners the opportunity to learn in other ways besides the conventional method of teaching and assessment. Chen's SBA practices seem to be more personalised in terms of her approach to guiding and facilitating her learners. This is also evident in the way she teaches reading, using colourful and decorative templates for her learners' writing activities, making them do a presentation of their work to the whole class and incorporating technology into her writing assessments. Chen also strongly believes that learners should not be tested until they are ready to be tested (e.g. she taught the content of the Linus test before giving the test for her students to do), and in her view, the effort that the students are putting forth into the tasks they do should be considered enough pupils and for her to know about her learners' progress. In Chen's assessment practices, she continues to guide (prompting, giving ideas what to write), give feedback and monitor her learners while they are doing their tasks, as characterised in the SBA.

4.3 Dennis

Dennis had been teaching for ten years at the time this study was conducted, about the same length of time as Chen. He teaches in a school outside the city area. According to Dennis, the students who go to the school are mostly children from the villages nearby. As in Liz's school, the language used for instruction is the Malay language. When I met Dennis in his favourite coffee shop in the city, I did not have the intention of audio-recording him, so I made notes on what he had to say during my meeting with him. I also did not get Dennis to write a month journal for me, but I took personal notes of my day-to-day conversations with him. I will also use these personal notes to reflect on his knowledge, experience and understanding of the implementation of SBA, and I will present his assessment practices from the classroom observation I conducted with him.

I asked Dennis about SBA and how he has experienced it. He spoke differently from Liz and Chen. He explained that when SBA was introduced, it was a bit of a shock to the teachers and parents. The online system and the recording of assessments on a daily basis were too much. But he said that it had been five years since its introduction, and a lot has changed. He said that teachers now have more flexibility in conducting and recording the learners' assessments. However, parents are still having difficulty in understanding the SBA and how their children are performing under the system. Dennis said that parents still seem to prefer the examination system. I observed in the notes I made from our conversations:

Parents still prefer knowing which ranking their children are in the classroom. It was difficult for him and the teachers in his school to make them understand. (*den/FN1/07-15/L31-L39*)

The first meeting I had with Dennis, he talked mostly about LINUS⁵ and the examination system and their effects on SBA. I wrote this note about what he said about SBA:

When KSSR was first introduced, and with the introduction of SBA under the new curriculum, he was so happy, because the idea was to let every individual shine, treated equally and assessed with the teachers' own judgement. (*den/personalnote/09-15*)

Dennis also mentioned the scores of SBA, saying that the scores the teachers give for a particular individual are often being questioned by officers.

When the teacher assessed and pupils only managed to achieve certain bands, let's say band 3, officers would start asking about or why only band 3. Dennis would often reply to them that it is where the students are at. That's how it is. (*den/personalnote/09-15*)

He was frustrated with the new examination format even after SBA was introduced. Dennis said it's no different from the previous one. This new format even has extra papers for the pupils to answer. He also mentioned his frustration with the LINUS programme and that it is not making SBA easy. To him, LINUS is not a bad programme, but the problem is mostly the

⁵ The Literacy and Numeracy Screening (LINUS) programme is aimed at ensuring that all Malaysian children acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills after three years of mainstream primary education. Under the Government Transformation Programme (GTP), the Education National Key Results Area (NKRA). The Education NKRA has set a 100% literacy and numeracy target for all Year Three pupils in Malaysia. <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2012/09/05/linus-programme-for-early-learning/#u3mr9OtG3dVOF54w.99>

way it is handled. Most specifically for him is that the courses, the training and the special professional development programme for LINUS do not really help the teachers manage LINUS classes. The overemphasis of the LINUS test results also do not help SBA to be implemented as it should:

SBA tends to have this great idea to treat students equally. Then LINUS came, and it's all about test. It's really confusing, he said. (*den/personalnote/09-15*)

However, Dennis believes in SBA, and he conducts SBA to help his pupils learn and help his own teaching. He explained that SBA was a good system and that the education system was on the right track. However, with SBA, teaching had become a bit tiring, because to him, it requires careful planning and teaching. When I asked how he conducts SBA, this was the answer:

For him, his SBA will be conducted at the end of every unit and on a daily basis. His assessment is based on observations (observing those...having difficulty coping with the teaching and learning) and keeping a track of these students in his diary or a reflection of it. (*den/MN1/07-15/L42-L46*)

To look into Dennis's SBA practices, I conducted two classroom observations with him. Dennis was teaching a Year Two (age 8, Level One) classroom when I observed him. He explained that he was doing reading comprehension for his lesson that day. He chose to focus on a story about burglary, from the KSSR English module. Dennis focussed on the reading component of the English language curriculum. The aim for the reading component, as discussed earlier, is for learners to read and comprehend a range of English texts for information and enjoyment. His assessment activity was to ask the learners to tick either true or false statements about the story which they had heard and learned. The assessment was

conducted 15 minutes prior to the end of the lesson. The extract below shows how he did this as well as the instructions he gave his learners during the assessment:

Extract: (den/co1/10-15/L626-L653)

T: OK, now I want you to keep the picture. OK, sit down everybody, now this one is an individual work. **ok buat kerja sendiri tidak boleh meniru** (*do it yourself, and you can't copy*) OK so, you can refer to the work earlier. OK, hello, you have a new friend (**a new pupil walks into the class**)

P: Hello!

A pupil: What's your name? (**a pupil asking the new student for her name**)

T: OK, you can sit there welcome. OK now, uh...**duduk semula di tempat biasa jangan duduk dalam kumpulan** (*sit at your own place not in group*) OK, you can go back to your seat. OK, now, so you look at the question. Read the following statements; if the statement is correct, you put a tick in the box provided; if the statement is false, you put a cross. Listen! OK **dengar sini** (*listen*) **kamu tanda betul atau salah** (*mark true or false*), you read all the statements there, for example number 1. The story begins early in the morning. Is it true or false.

P: False

T: The statement is false, because the story begins at midnight? Midnight-**kan** (*right*)? Not early in the morning. So it's wrong, so **bagi tanda cross, pangkah**. (*make a cross*) Alright, number 2–9 you do it yourself. If you don't understand, you ask me, OK? Escape means "**melarikan diri**" (then the students started to do their work; while [they were] doing so, Dennis said the following)

T: OK you answer all the questions. **Siapkan besok hantar** (*finish it and hand in tomorrow*) **siapa yang sudah siap boleh hantar sekarang** (those who have finish can hand in). If you have completed you can submit. OK, come on, we have 1 more minute (some students have completed and

- hand in their work to Dennis) so, the rest of you can send to me tomorrow.
- A pupil: **kalau tidak siap hantar kah?** (*if not finish can we hand in?*)
- T: No, tomorrow. The pictures you can keep. Yes, it's for you. Anyone else?

In the activity above, Dennis tells the class that the task is an individual activity. While Dennis was about to explain the activity, a new student was introduced to the class. Dennis asked the class to greet the new student and instructed her to sit in one empty sitting place next to another girl student in the classroom. Dennis continued to explain to the class that the task was a true and false statement activity. After explaining, he sat on the teachers' table, watching over them. One student seemed to complete the task in a second. As the class was about to end, Dennis told the class that they could hand in the task by the end of day or the next day. A few pupils rushed to complete the task and hand it in to Dennis while he was about to leave the class for another lesson. While I was sitting at the back of the classroom observing (*den/fn1/09-15*):

O.C: I was getting really sweaty at the back of the classroom, because there was no electricity supply and it was only in this classroom, as I was informed. I walk to the windows several times and fanning myself with my notebook. I keep asking myself how on earth could Dennis stand such the heat and how the student could stand it through the whole lesson.

In this assessment which Dennis conducted, he was assessing his learners' understanding of the story. His assessment seems to match the aim of the reading component of the English language curriculum. In his lesson, Dennis introduced the word lists used in the story. He asked his learners to memorise each word and conducted a spelling activity with them at the beginning of his lesson. Later on, he put them into groups of four or five and

distributed a worksheet for each group. Each group had to fill in the blanks and complete the story. Dennis showed each picture of the word which the learners needed to write in the blank spaces in the worksheets. Below is an example of the activity and the way Dennis introduced the story to his learners:

Extract: (den/co1/10-15/L436-L468)

- T: OK, now I'm going to give you this. OK, this one you can also do in your group, OK. This one, uh... You fill in the blank. OK, but don't do anything yet. Once you've got this paper, don't do anything yet. OK, wait for my instruction. ***Jangan dulu buat apa-apa*** (*don't do anything yet*) (Dennis distributing the worksheet) Alright, now look at the passage. OK, look at the passage. *Alright, I will show you the picture. You fill in the blanks (repeats in the Malay language)* ok, ***saya bagi tengok gambar kamu isi tempat kosong.***
- A pupil: OK, next, it is...
- T: OK, done, OK, do not mention the answer. Alright I ... the light to sleep. OK, ... I ... mmmm ... the light to sleep. Done?
- A pupil: OK, ***sudah*** (*done*)
- T: ***Sudah?*** Alright, can we continue. 'suddenly'
- P: Suddenly
- T: Don't repeat. Suddenly, I hear some ... coming from my neighbour ... I hear some ... mmm ... coming from my neighbour ...
- A pupil: ***sudah*** (*all ready*)
- T: OK, can we continue? I walk to the ... mmmm ... and look outside. I walk to the ... mmm ... and look outside.
- A pupil: ***sudah*** (*all ready*)
- T: Done? OK, next. I see a man wearing ...

While Dennis distributed the task, I stood up to look at what it was. The task was in the form of a passage. Throughout the activity, Dennis guided them by showing a picture, and his students had to guess what the picture was

and fill the blank with a word they remembered from the activity they did earlier. Some group would ask Dennis for help from time to time. Once all of the groups had completed the task, he made them read the passage aloud, and each group took turns reading.

In this lesson, I saw that the pupils were participating in the learning through responses which they gave in the classroom. Although the students were only able to interact with the teacher in short phrases and mostly using the Malay language, they seemed to be engaged in the learning. As in Liz and Chen's lessons, Dennis tried to minimise the use of the Malay language. He says that it is important to use the English language for teaching, because based on his experience, his learners are able to pick up the language more quickly this way. He thinks and feels that by using English as the medium of instruction, his pupils will be able to feel more comfortable speaking in the language. Just like in Liz and Chen's lessons, in both of Dennis's classroom assessments, he relied more upon the use of worksheets than any other of the suggested tools for assessment. The use of worksheets in his classroom shows that the writing skill was the most emphasised part of the assessment compared to any other skills of the English language curriculum.

In order to understand the reasons behind Dennis's assessment practices, I also conducted a post-classroom observation interview with him. During my observation with Dennis, he used worksheets as part of his teaching strategy and assessment. He said that it was important to re-evaluate his approaches in the classroom, and the worksheets helped him to do this. He thinks the

pupils' results from the worksheet show him which part of his lessons need adjustments. He will re-do a whole lesson and the assessment if he finds out that his learners are not doing well in the task he gives:

When I gave them the worksheets it's actually more for me. It is actually more to really evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching. Yes, because I want to check whether uhm ... what I did in the classroom really help the student understand the story, actually. So, I haven't really checked their worksheets but maybe once I found out that, OK, for example, my students could not able to answer as well as desired. I would re-evaluate my lesson. I would evaluate my approach. (den/12/10-15/L77-L83)

To Dennis, the purpose of assessment is not only to verify learners' learning achievements but also to verify how the teachers are doing with their teaching. He said they would be able to make adjustments and modifications to their teaching and assessment approaches on the basis on what they find out.

Apart from this, I encountered Dennis's use of the English language in the classroom. He says it is important to use the English language when teaching, because through all his experience, his learners have been able to pick up some phrases and use and apply them in their communication with him.

I think uh ... it's important; by using English, I think it uhm ... it makes them familiarise with the language. Yes, and they feel comfortable actually speaking in that language. (den/12/10-15/L120-L123)

I also noticed that Dennis tries to get his learners to speak by asking them to give meanings for a particular word or phrase. He thinks that this is important in using his learners' previous knowledge. He says:

Yes, I don't think that students come to school uhm ... without knowing anything. They have prior knowledge, right? So, I was trying to elicit from them so they could uhm ... like, activate their previous knowledge, and they felt good when they were able to answer the questions correctly. (*den/12/10-15/L146-L150*)

He went on:

And then I also think that doing that, it encourages more English, actually, because, let say, if they gave me the wrong answer and I would give them, I would explain later, and then you know would use more English with them. It would encourage a more communicative environment if I elicit answers. (*den/12/10-15/L150-L154*)

Similarly, as in Liz's lesson, I noticed that Dennis used a memorisation technique as a part of his teaching strategy and to help his students with the classroom assessment later on. His view on this technique is that when the students are introduced to and memorise new vocabulary, it should be done in a fun and engaging way.

Yes, I think uh ... at the end of the day, they have to memorise. But I don't really believe in memorising sentence, and I don't really believe in memorising structures. Uhm ... you know some people call it template, you know. So, you give them a certain template and ask them to memorise. So whenever they have, they have to write a paragraph or essay, they just use what you have already given them. (*den/13/10-15/L83-L88*)

He goes on:

I don't believe in that, but I do think in terms of learning vocabulary, you know, learning new words. I think it's very important for us, you know, help the student memorise all the words in a fun way. Yes, I don't advocate memorisation of words, you know, by force. Yes, I try as hard as I can, you know, get the students remember the words in a fun way, in an engaging way. (*den/13/10-15/L88-L93*)

Besides asking Dennis about his actions during his classroom observation, I wanted to know how he had recorded the assessment he conducted with his pupils. He responded that he recorded it in his lesson plan (as in Liz and Chen's practice). I asked in which part of the lesson plan he had recorded them. He said:

In the reflection part and then uhm ... I would record in the offline form. This offline these days for school based assessment. So I would record uhm ... students work ... in that offline form uh ... the offline software. (*den/12/09-15/L52-L54*)

I asked how frequently he records his learners' assessment performance:

Uh ... usually uhm ... like what I did yesterday, so I just uhm ... keep everything by myself first. OK, and then when uhm ... OK, and the school admins uh ... ask us to fill in the form, then, only then we do it. So I have to record everything. I have to keep it. Then by the time I fill the form I have something to refer to. (*den/12/09-15/L62-L66*)

During my second post-classroom observation interview with Dennis, I asked the same questions about how and where he would be recording the assessment he had conducted. In reply, he said that he would also keep everything to himself and would only do an official recording and transferring of all the data in the offline SBA system when the school administration required him to do so.

Despite scoring and grading, Dennis had a similar view as Chen, saying that he would lower his own expectations of what his learners could and could not do (on the basis what he's found out in the assessment). He also believes that teachers should appreciate when learners are trying their best to complete the task given to them. He said:

In my lesson, I always have different expectations. So for my weak students, for example, if in the lesson there are ten words and if they manage to memorise five words, then it's OK already. (*den/12/10-15/L177-L180*)

Dennis's view of appreciation shows that despite the aims of the English language curriculum, which targets the learners to acquire all the required skills at the end of the primary schooling and expects the teachers to deliver this, it does not seem to be so important to Dennis. What is important to him is the effort which the pupils put into their learning and the knowledge they gain.

Although guiding and facilitating are part of the characteristics of the Malaysian primary school SBA, I did not see that Dennis had guided and facilitated his learners throughout the assessment activity, as he claimed and planned to make a record of. As mentioned above, he sat and watched his students doing the assessment. He explained this by saying that throughout his lesson, he had conducted some form of assessment with his learners. As discussed above, regarding his practices (extract: *den/co1/10-15/L436-L468*), he gives guidance to his learners in answering the information gap tasks as way to scaffold their understanding of the reading comprehension he conducts in his lesson. Then, once he thinks his learners have understood completely, he gives the final worksheets, which are his classroom assessments of individual learners. He says that if the learners were not able to understand, he would not be giving the final worksheets:

Let say if uhm ... they still were not able to do it as likely as desired, so that means I had not given them the worksheets. But based on my observation, most of the students have already had the ability to

understand to fully structure sentences, why I decided to give the worksheets. (*den/13/09-15/L51-L55*)

He said that the worksheet is his real assessment, because throughout his lesson, he did not get to assess the pupils individually. Most of the other activities were conducted through group work, so those assessments only allowed him to roughly know how his learners were doing. He said:

So I just uh ... wanted to know them roughly, you know, but then the worksheet is the ultimate part of my assessment, because uhm ... you get to know each students, whether they already acquire the structure or not. (*den/13/09-15/L57-L59*)

Dennis also further expressed his opinions of SBA in my day-to-day conversations with him. When KSSR was introduced with SBA under the new curriculum, he was so happy, because the idea was to let every individual shine, be treated equally and be assessed with the teachers' own judgement. A few times, he mentioned his opinions about the introduction of SBA into Malaysian primary school education and seems to agree with its introduction. In my notes, I wrote:

Dennis explains that SBA is a good system and the education system is in the right track. However, with SBA, teaching becomes a bit tiring, because it requires careful planning and teaching. (*den/MN1/07-15/L39-L40*)

Dennis, in favouring SBA, talks much about its implementation being impeded by the existence of the LINUS programme. He believes that SBA is an assessment conducted during the teaching and learning process, an assessment which treats every individual equally, whereas LINUS divides individuals into two separate groups (literate and illiterate). He said LINUS is no different from examinations which require the teachers to teach the

learners to pass test papers, during the teaching and learning in the classroom. In my notes I wrote:

Dennis added that any kind of changes introduced in the education system will work, but only when the programme is design and given special attention to provide and prioritise teaching and learning to learners and not solely based on documentation alone (*den/MN1/09-15/L64-L67*).

Overall, Dennis views assessment as important. He says it can provide useful information for the future direction of classroom practice, for planning and for managing learning tasks for his learners. He also says that when assessing, teachers need to conduct the assessment in a very interesting way. This view is based on his experience; when he does assessment, he makes sure his students do not realise they are being assessed.

Dennis believes that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. He still seems to believe in the traditional way of teaching and assessing with respect to the use of memorisation techniques in his teaching and the dominant use of worksheets in assessment. However, he also believes that the traditional approach can be done in a more interesting and enjoyable way, without the learners knowing they are being assessed. His view of the importance of group work during the lesson is an example:

I think it's easier for me, and usually when I do group work, I do it in game full manner, so that means I would give them points, for example, if they manage to answer the questions correctly, I would give them points. By doing that, I think it increases the students' motivation so they are more link to go through the lesson. (*den/I2/10-15/L108-L112*)

I later returned to Dennis's school with the same purpose as I did with Liz and Chen. In my findings from Dennis's interviews and assessment practices, I categorised six themes. Dennis talks mainly about the following: his use of the Malay language in the classroom, the worksheets for assessment, the memorisation of words and the scoring and reporting of SBA.

Dennis began saying that even though he uses the Malay language to explain difficult words or phrases, he currently tries not to use it too much in his classrooms. He had noticed that his students seem to remember the parts of the lessons which were explained in Malay but not those in English. Therefore, he had changed his approach:

So, oh, I even changed my approach a bit, you know. So, uhm ... I expose them to the English words first, OK. And I only gave them the Malay translation whenever they don't understand them, I would ask them first. (*den/pv/08-16/L23-L26*)

Then Dennis explained that he still holds on to the same principle about his use of the worksheets in his classroom. He says that the worksheets he uses for assessment are mostly for himself, to evaluate his teaching approaches. This is also the reason that he does not mark the papers he distributes to his pupils, unless he is teaching grammar lessons:

So whenever they forgot, I need to return the worksheets to them, so that they know their mistakes but some I don't even mark. I just look at them. So, that means uhm ... if let's say, 20 out of 40 students understood, they could do the worksheets well, and I said OK, then that means my lesson was not really that bad, because, like, half of them could really understand. (*den/pv/08-16/L49-L54*)

He continued:

So uh ... but sometimes I do that more often. I do that more often uh ... when I give them, I want to see if they really understood. Not to evaluate them but evaluate my teaching, the approaches that I used, especially when it's something new. (*den/pv/08-16/L58-L61*)

Then I asked Dennis when he would do his assessments for his pupils and the ones which he keeps for scoring and recording. Dennis explained that the only time he really records and tests the ability of his pupils is during the school's monthly or semester examination. This means Dennis only does the assessment and records them in the offline system when the school conducts its semester examination. This also means he depends on the school when he needs to record his assessments:

So, yes, so I think the only time when I give them the worksheets is for the purpose of evaluating their ability would be, maybe at the end of the month, or yes, monthly test, or you know, the semester one examination. (*den/pv/08-16/L78-L81*)

Although Dennis reaffirmed that he does not believe in the memorisation of words, phrases and sentence structures, he still believes that it is important for his students to memorise. He added that by students memorising certain kinds of phrases or sentences, those phrases or sentences will become more meaningful.

My conversations with Dennis ended with some more discussions about word-for-word translations from Malay to the English language. He said that this is the main reason that teachers, particularly those who are not trained

to be English language teachers but are required to teach the subject in schools, face difficulties with their students' writing.

Summary

Dennis used some language translation to get the meaning of his activity across during the explanation of his assessment. He conducts memorisation activity to get his students to remember the word list which they have learned. He makes use of a task-based approach to do his group work activities and to scaffold his students' understanding of the story before he conducts his real assessment. He uses games in preparing them for the reading comprehension and the assessment and throughout his lesson (e.g. his technique of introducing new words in a playful manner). Dennis is able to use approaches from the past which he thinks are appropriate and useful for his learners. Table 8 is a summary of Liz, Chen and Dennis's practice.

Table 8: Summary of teachers' practices

<i>Aims of English curriculum</i>	<i>Suggested activities</i>	<i>Liz's practices</i>	<i>Chen's practices</i>	<i>Dennis's practices</i>
<p>Learners should be assessed to determine level in different skills:</p> <p>Listening & Speaking</p> <p>Reading</p> <p>Writing</p> <p>Language arts</p> <p>Teachers are expected to conduct:</p> <p>Formative assessment as</p>	<p>Speaking:</p> <p>Communicate with peers and adults confidently and appropriately in formal and informal situations</p> <p>Suggested/ recommended activities</p> <p>Teachers may use checklists to record their students' progress as part of the assessment activities while they perform or speak</p>	<p>Uses the English language as the language of instruction</p> <p>Believes speaking is an important skill to be learned</p> <p>Thinks and feels the more English is used in the classroom, the more student will be able to understand the language</p> <p>No practice of speaking skills during the lesson among the learners</p> <p>One-way interaction, learners were not able to use the language in a communicative way</p> <p>No assessment conducted on the speaking component in the</p>	<p>Uses the English language as the language of instruction</p> <p>Believes that students should be experiencing the language more at this primary school level</p> <p>No practice of the speaking skill among the students during the lesson</p> <p>No assessment conducted of the speaking component in the lesson</p>	<p>Uses the English language as the language of instruction</p> <p>Thinks and feels that by using the English language more in the classroom, his students will be more comfortable in speaking the language</p> <p>Practice to communicate peer to peer is lacking</p> <p>No assessment conducted in the speaking component during the lesson</p>

<p>an-going process in teaching and learning</p> <p>Summative assessment at the end of every learning unit</p>	<p>during assembly (e.g. making announcements, reciting poems, singing in groups or telling stories). In the classroom, teachers may use classroom observations to observe their students' engagement in conversations with their peers or activities (e.g. role play, drama).</p>	<p>lesson</p>		
	<p>Reading:</p> <p>Read and comprehend a range of English texts for information and enjoyment</p> <p>Suggested/recommended</p>	<p>Students continuously repeated after the teacher each vocabulary word, phrase and sentence pattern</p> <p>Uses the same text for a week or two</p> <p>Uses short sentences to describe a picture or story</p> <p>The text is used to reinforce the</p>	<p>Demonstrated the way to read a story</p> <p>Believes that learners should know how to read a particular text for information, enjoyment etc.</p> <p>Uses stories in both of her lessons</p> <p>No assessment conducted on</p>	<p>Introduces the word list to be used in the story</p> <p>Memorising word lists, doing spelling activities to enable the students to understand the main points of the story used in the lesson</p> <p>Uses pictures to help with telling the story</p>

	<p>activities</p> <p>Teachers may use questions and activities which incorporate graphic and/or semantic organisers, story maps or summarisation to assess their students' ability to read and comprehend texts.</p>	<p>students' learning and prepare them for written assessment in the lesson</p> <p>No assessment conducted on the reading component during the lesson</p>	<p>the reading component of the lesson</p>	<p>Conducted reading assessment on the students' understanding of the story, using worksheets</p>
	<p>Writing:</p> <p>Write a range of texts using appropriate language style and form through a variety of media</p> <p>Use correct and appropriate rules of grammar in speech</p>	<p>Uses worksheets for assessment in both of her lessons</p> <p>Focuses the lesson on how students should answer the particular task</p> <p>To prepare students for the task, does a lot of repetition of phrases and sentences</p> <p>Both lessons focused on the writing component for the assessment</p>	<p>Uses different templates for learners to write their written work, to make it interesting</p> <p>Incorporated the use of notebook (Padlet programme) in the lesson</p> <p>Both lessons focused on how to write the character of their choice and to retell a story with help of some notes</p>	<p>Used worksheets in both lessons</p> <p>Lesson focused on writing, spelling and filling in the blanks, writing sentences to describe a picture</p> <p>Both lessons concentrated on writing component</p>

	<p>and writing</p> <p>Suggested/recommended activities</p> <p>Teachers may incorporate elements of written projects or activities (e.g. tests, exams, class exercises, journals, diary, poems, writing scripts, dialogues and song lyrics). Additionally, teachers may also use creative projects to assess students' progress.</p>		<p>given</p> <p>More of teacher talking time was spent helping learners with their work</p> <p>The focus of assessment was on this skill for both lessons</p>	
	<p>Language arts:</p> <p>Appreciate and demonstrate understanding of English language literary or creative</p>	<p>No activity conducted on this skill during the lesson</p>	<p>Shared session with the class on students' work during the lesson</p> <p>No assessment conducted on this skill during the lesson</p>	<p>No assessment activity conducted on this component</p>

	<p>work for enjoyment</p> <p>Suggested/recommended activities</p> <p>Expose pupils to different literary genres such as short stories, poems and graphic novels. Explore a variety of literary works and engage them in preparing, performing and producing creative works. Teachers are to exploit texts in these genres to create fun-filled and meaningful activities so that pupils enjoy the learning experience and gain exposure to the aesthetic use of language.</p>			
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4.4 Summary

Above, I presented portrayals of Liz, Chen and Dennis with respect to their knowledge SBA, their practices and their beliefs about assessment as well as the significant differences among them in terms of their teaching and assessment practices. Now I will summarise their common beliefs about SBA and their relation to what is recommended in the curriculum.

1. *Assessment as a process for learning:* It is clear to them that assessment involves more than just testing. For them, assessment is a natural process which takes into account not just the product but the whole process, such as the students' attitudes, the students' progress and also their effort in completing the tasks given to them.
2. *Teaching and assessment are inseparable:* Assessment provides an intrinsic motivation for the teachers to develop and improve on their own teaching. It tells them where and what to change in their approaches. It gives them the opportunity to make adjustments to teaching and assessment practices and to become familiar with other possible methods of teaching and assessment. Dennis, for example, says he cannot imagine teaching without assessment.
3. *Memorisation and repetition drills:* It was noticed, through the teachers' responses, that Liz and Dennis believe in the efficacy of this method to construct meanings of the words, phrases and sentences used in the lesson. Most activities assigned were related to drilling in vocabulary and sentences and to translating from English to Malay and vice versa. The teachers also mentioned that they used the

memorising of vocabulary, phrases and sentences as well as repetition during reading and writing activities. They said that this was to enable the learners to recall the language already taught when they were assessed later.

4. *The integration of interactive learning:* In the effort to change what is done in the classroom with respect to assessment, the teachers in this study have tried to incorporate games, dynamics, role play and presentations (e.g. Dennis). This strategy is thought to encourage students' participation in the lesson, and participation means involvement. In contrast, Liz tries to avoid such activities as to her it will disrupt her lesson.
5. *Worksheet-based assessment:* The use of worksheets was one of the teachers' most popular choices of teaching strategies employed in the classrooms to ensure assessment had taken place. Worksheets provide an opportunity for the teachers to make links between what is learned and where to take the learners in the next level of the lesson. The teachers in this study assessed their students' learning as they worked in the classroom and did not just collect the worksheets at the end of their lessons. The teachers walked around the classroom and stopped at particular individuals and offered the guidance they needed. The teachers even used prompting strategies to give ideas and guidance in the students' writing tasks.

The teachers in this study showed that they had some knowledge and strong beliefs about the Malaysian primary school SBA, based on the evidence gathered in the preliminary interviews I conducted with them. These

teachers also dealt with SBA in their own unique ways, with their own sets of beliefs, which might have been influenced by the number of years of their teaching experiences and the kind of training that they had with the SBA. For example, Liz had been teaching for twenty-four years and so she might be more accustomed to and influenced by the traditional method of teaching-assessment in which pupils should listen and repeat after the teacher, memorize new language, group work should be avoided for fear that the activity would disrupt her lesson.

By contrast, Dennis had only been teaching for ten years and had been trained more recently. Therefore, although he believes that assessment involves memorization, he believed that memorization should be conducted in a fun and interesting way. It is possible that this is because his teacher training experiences could have exposed to him to a variety of activities that are more fun and engaging, or emphasised the need to entertain learners as well as educate them.

The teachers' SBA practices may also differ with regard to how recently they have undergone their SBA training. For instance, Liz had her SBA training when it was first introduced in 2011 and Dennis in 2012 and as stated in the literature review (see Section 2.5). Since SBA is still new, the trainers might have not covered some details that the teachers should have been aware of (e.g. the importance of feedback in formative assessment). The teachers had less exposure to what SBA really is. By contrast, Chen had her SBA training four years after Liz (in 2014) in which she was also the district English language Year Four KSSR trainer. This meant that Chen had first-

hand exposure to SBA and the English language KSSR curriculum during her training. The trainers who trained her might have had more exposure to what SBA is and might have learnt something from the past courses. Therefore, she showed confidence in her SBA practices involving more hints, pointers and prompting for her pupils during their assessment. She also created more group work activities and employed a variety of colourful assessment materials.

Additionally, the teachers' practices may have been influenced by other factors such as class size, the streaming of the classes or the physical condition of the classrooms. For example Liz's Year One classroom consisted of a group of pupils who had problems with their numeracy and literacy and it also had the most number of pupils compared to the other Year One classrooms. According to Liz, her class often misbehaved. This was also the reason Liz would not conduct any group work for her class. Therefore, she preferred using activities that she thinks could control the behaviour of her pupils- for instance she distributes one worksheet after another so she could attend to other pupils. Even so, as shown in Liz's portrayal above, one of her pupil had boldly walked towards me asking what I was doing while Liz was still teaching and attending to them. Chen in the other hand, had fewer number of pupils (less than twenty pupils) in her Year Five classroom. Her pupils were also aged between ten to eleven years old. Therefore, she used group work activities more often as part of her assessment because they were more able to respond to instructions given to them. Although Dennis is teaching a Year Two classroom (age 8), he may

prefer using group work prior to his assessment because according to Dennis the class he was teaching were streamed and they are good performing pupils compared to the rest of the Year Two classrooms in his school. The class were also able to response to instruction given to them.

However, the teachers in the study as stated earlier also held common beliefs and engaged in common practices, for example, trying to integrate the strategies recommended in the SBA document with the traditional methods as a way of dealing with the SBA practices and other priorities. I also noticed in the teachers' responses and with my classroom observations with them that the teachers' guidance is associated with feedback (through hints, prompting etc.) and the results of the assessment had helped them to alter and modify their teaching-learning strategies in the classroom according to the learners' needs and their pupils' proficiency level. However, the teachers had not said about how the pupils responded to the feedback and if the pupils were able to move forward in their learning with the feedback. This is because the teachers might think that SBA is all about teachers changing and improving their lesson, motivating learners to learn the English language, giving the learners the kind of lesson they need but not about learners getting to respond to the feedback and how their respond to the feedback could improve their learning. For example, when I asked Dennis about what the assessment result helped him with, he said that it helped him to find ways to improve his teaching and find the activities that are more fun and engaging for his learners.

In the following chapters, I will examine further other contextual factors which may appear to affect the willingness or ability of Malaysian teachers to implement SBA as recommended in the documents, using data from all seven teachers and other participants.

Chapter 5: Factors Influencing Teachers' Willingness and Ability to implement SBA

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed Liz, Chen and Dennis's knowledge of SBA. I also presented their practices of SBA and the beliefs and factors influencing their assessment practices. In this section, I will discuss factors influencing teachers' willingness and ability in the implementation of the Malaysian primary school SBA, exemplifying the argument with data from my interactions with all the participants.

5.1.1 Training and knowledge about SBA

Even though all seven teachers in the study understand that the introduction of SBA meant to be a substitute for examinations, their responses to the training and their knowledge about SBA show some concerns. For example, in my preliminary interview with Chen, she shared about her ability to handle the KSSR English language curriculum Year Four in primary school. She said that she is aware her experience with the new curriculum is still limited, even though she has undergone the first level of the cascade training. She says:

My experience in handling courses for KSSR English is still limited and even I myself take three years to fully understand and to fully embody this KSSR thing. How do you think the teachers are coping?
(chen/11/07-15/L170-L173)

In relation to that, Chen mentioned the training for the new curriculum and SBA which was initially conducted during its introduction. In her opinion, the training did not help teachers fully understand what KSSR means in practice. Based on her observations while conducting and being in the training, the teachers who attended the training did not have a clear understanding of SBA and the English language curriculum, because they themselves were not paying attention to what had been delivered to them. Even if they were paying attention, she says, during the initial course, the people themselves who delivered the training were not clear on what to present to the teachers. Chen goes on:

You know I would like just to say a little bit of the downside of SBA. It's because the lack of training, because the lack of the training, teachers don't understand KSSR fully. They don't fully understand SBA, they go back to the school, they implement their idea of the SBA, and what's going to happen is that these pupils are not going to be benefit really fully from the SBA. (*chen/11/07-15/L325-L329*)

Similarly, Mae (see, Section 3.7, Table 3 for information about the participants) also talks about the training for SBA and claims that she does not even know the reason why SBA has been introduced into primary school. She was instructed to teach the English language subject and to implement SBA without any training on the new curriculum or even in SBA. She reports:

Hmmm ... actually, I am not quite sure why SBA is being introduced, because when I knew about SBA, I was not provided any training nor was I given enough information about SBA. So, I look for the information myself. So whether it is right or wrong, I am not sure either. When I asked around, most of my friends said that I am doing things correctly. There is really no exact guide for the teachers. (*Mae/11/06-15/L113-L118*)

In terms of knowledge, when I conducted preliminary interviews with my seven participants, I asked what they know about formative and summative assessment. Liz said that formative assessments are simple — just tests conducted monthly — and she does not do monthly tests, because her school does not encourage the administering of a monthly test. She explained that her school usually does summative assessment every three months. I received a similar response from Su:

Formative assessment is like test, right. The new
KSSR English curriculum just don't encourage tests.
(Su/11/06-15/L409-L410)

The preference to use worksheets in Liz, Chen and Dennis's classrooms as the most predominant instrument for assessment suggests that teachers' knowledge with respect to using other assessments (e.g. checklists, quizzes, observations, oral presentations etc.), as recommended by the Malaysian SBA, is also rather limited in scope. Liz prefers worksheets because, according to her, they provide quicker results for her students' progress in learning. Another example revealing the teachers' knowledge of the formative assessment technique was when Daniel explained that the time factor had made his school use workbooks for SBA. He said that the workbook is sufficient for use as his classroom assessment. It is up to the teachers to create the test by referring to the workbooks. Doing other related administrative duties does not allow them the time to create and plan for proper SBA. Therefore, he felt it was easier for him just to use the workbook. He said:

Uhm ... we have SBA committee, and they will decide
where we should get the instrument from, OK. And
then it's up to the English panel to find the instrument

and create themselves. In this case, we don't have time to create the instrument. This is good enough. I think the workbook is good enough. It is very sufficient to, to, assess students. *(Daniel/11/06-15/L284-L289)*

The teachers' reporting about the training and their responses on formative assessment indicates why they rely only on worksheets for SBA in the classroom. Worksheets are what teachers already know about conducting assessments. The kind of training provided for the teachers was not sufficient to help the teachers understand what SBA consists of in classroom practice and what formative assessment means.

5.1.2 The examination system

One of the objectives of introducing SBA into the Malaysian primary school classroom was to lessen the overemphasis on examinations in the education system and to help each individual in his or her learning growth. During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to join a couple of the English language panel meetings at Liz's school. In these meetings, the English language panels mainly discussed their students' examination performance and the kind of strategies they needed to help the students in their coming national examination.

I also conducted an interview with Chen's head teacher. She said that her school conducts SBA because it is only the requirement of the ministry. Her school still relies on examinations each month to inform the parents and to be kept as the school's record. The results of the examinations help them find ways to develop strategies or programmes to improve students'

examination performance. She said that her school results had dropped the year before, and her teaching staff are trying their best to get excellent results. This is why examinations are perceived as important in her school. To her, doing SBA in her school is just part of the requirement of the ministry, and they just have to do it.

I received a similar response when I interviewed Liz's assistant head teacher. She said that her teachers will only conduct SBA when the education officers require them to submit a report on it. She added that the SBA system is confusing for the parents too. Therefore, to overcome the confusion, her school had chosen to report students' performance to parents as they usually had (e.g. letter grades, ranking in the classroom). Being a parent herself, she reported that she prefers this kind of reporting and not the SBA.

During my stay in each school, I asked for access on the school's yearly planning. My review of the yearly planning is that examination schedule was mostly highlighted in the three schools. Apart from the above-mentioned, four months after leaving my fieldwork at the schools, I returned to each school for a short, friendly visit. I manage to talk with my participants and most of the teachers in the school, including the head teacher. I noted about my visits:

It was not surprising to me that the teachers started to talk about the new format for UPSR English language papers. The teachers mentioned that they are now busy preparing their students since early of the year with the new formatted sample paper provided by the Ministry of Education Examination Board. Some even have started training to teach the new format English

language papers with the other classes in Year 4 and Year 5. (personal notes/04-16)

In addition to the discussion above, when I had completed my data validation with Liz, Chen and Dennis, I arranged a telephone interview with a senior officer in the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. The senior officer positioned in the department provided me with in-depth information about the KSSR and the SBA. Although I was not able to contact a person from the department which proposed the idea of SBA policy, I was able to capture some valuable information from the senior officer who agreed to share about SBA. At the request of the officer, I am unable to state her exact position in the department but as an important person at the unit, she gave detailed information with regards to the following. The main reason for interviewing the officer from the ministry was to ask whether primary school teachers are implementing SBA and about the challenges in the implementation. The interview took place on a Saturday morning in mid-September 2016, from Leeds, England.

In relation to examinations and their expectations, the officer I interviewed stated that schools had put more effort into examinations. In her view, the teachers in schools had put more focus on teaching and producing students with straight A's in the examinations. The parents were emphasising the importance of examinations to their children, and in turn, this had become a culture (teaching towards examinations). However, she added, students who have obtained good results on examinations do not reflect their A's when they enter the workforce. She said:

It's a culture of our society. I think getting all A's, 10 A 1's or 13 A 1's, is very much celebrated. So we noticed that, you know, when, when we start to produce pupils with a lot of A's but when they actually enter the workforce, right, enter the workforce we notice that even if they have 10 A 1's but still, you know, their A 1's do not reflect their A's. (co/09-16/L168-L173)

The official added that since examinations are regarded as high-stakes and important, the teaching of writing had been the element most concentrated on in teaching and learning, while other skills had been neglected (e.g. listening, speaking and reading). This information means that it was not just the training which caused teachers to concentrate and focus on assessing writing skills, but also, the examination system had been an influence on the teachers' practices of SBA. The official had to agree that the teachers had no choice but had to achieve the examination targets set for them. Although saying this, she also said:

If you look at our English pedagogy principles, pedagogical principles, listening skills is one of the most important skills that had been neglected, because if the pupils do not listen for ideas, for details, they don't have the skills to listen and to actually infer and find, I mean can, you know, find decent information and so on. How would they be able to speak? How can they be able, you know uhm ... I mean, generate ideas in their mind and to produce it. How can they use the information in their schemata to do writing. (co/09-16/L193-L199)

I then asked why it was important for formative assessment to be introduced and implemented. The senior officer replied that teachers will have to teach and assess all the skills in the English language. It is important that the teachers do not disregard one skill and focus on another which is considered

much more important. Then the officer further stated that it is important that students' achievements are not compared against those of other students:

Formative assessment focuses on each individual, I am not testing individual pupils against another pupils, but we are helping that particular student to actually uh ... the teacher is trying to identify the strength of the pupils and his weaknesses as well. How she can work and bring the pupils strength from the pupils' weaknesses. (co/09-16/L177-L181)

Despite the official's views and opinions about SBA and what the teachers are supposed to do, an interview I had with Liz's head of the English language panel mentioned that their school and the teachers had no choice but to go back towards examinations. She said that in the end, when officials come to visit the school, the first thing they will ask is how well the school performed in the national examination in the previous year, or what the expectation is for the upcoming exam. She commented that these officers will not be asking how each individual student is performing; they will ask for the figures, percentages and letter grades of the school. So even though she says that SBA is a good idea as an alternative to assessing students' performance, teachers have to rely on examinations. Teachers have to teach towards examination expectations. She explains:

But unfortunately, education officers, they never asked, *'Do they like to learn English?'* When they come, they would start asking *'What is the percentage for exam? How many passes? How many A's? What is your KPI¹?'* That's the word they always use — KPI. What to do, right? (Liz/headEnglishpanel/07-15/L66-L71)

¹ Key Performance Indicator.

Based on this discussion, examination expectations influence the way the teachers practice SBA. The examination expectations affect what teachers teach, the strategy and materials they use and the activities they adopt in the classroom. The official also agreed that the biggest challenge in introducing and implementing formative assessment in the Malaysian education system is examinations. She explained:

OK, because this is something new for some teachers. Actually, formative assessment for quite sometimes, you know, in 1960s. It's just that in our culture, there are very much into summative assessment so you know to change teachers and the public perspective is quite difficult. It is a challenge to them, every test every exam is high stake. Formative assessment is not high stake. (co/09-16/L296-L301)

According to the officer, introducing and implementing formative assessment is difficult, because some prefer summative examinations. When saying this, the officer refers mainly to the Level Two (Years 4–6) formative assessment:

It's very much exam, exam, exam, but what about other things that need to be actually acquired, like the skills. So it takes time. It is being introduce and it is not even three years but we are trying to actually you know to explain to them the importance of formative assessment for the individual pupils' development; if not, if too much of summative exam, only the good ones will be, I mean uh ... they will pay attention into the good ones with A's, those who produce A's but what about those who being left behind? (co/09-16/L334-L341)

The officer further elaborated that since formative assessment is still new, gaining the teachers' and public's understanding takes time. The Malaysian education system is aiming for inclusiveness and not exclusiveness, that is, to give fair treatment to each individual student through formative assessment. The officer said:

If you have a child who is not an A material and is not given, you know, attention, because you are not an A material and the other pupil who are A material, teachers give a lot of attention, how do you feel? And you feel angry, and you start to blame the system, right. Yes, we are human, we are human beings, and we start to blame the system so, hopefully with this formative assessment, you know, the child is not being left behind. (co/09-16/L372-L377)

The officer concluded:

If the teacher understands the importance of formative assessment, if the teacher treats formative assessment like summative assessment, it goes back to square one. (co/09-16/L365-L367)

In saying this, the officer meant that formative assessment should be given the same importance as summative assessment to create a balance in the students' learning and to allow them to acquire all the necessary skills mentioned earlier. That is, each individual student should be given the opportunity to perform well in school.

5.1.3 Scoring, recording and reporting of SBA

All the teachers also recognise that the SBA they conduct should be recorded. The scoring should follow the guidelines (see Section 1.5.5) and then be recorded three times a year. It can then be used to report to parents on a semester or a yearly basis. Even after the introduction of the offline system, the teachers had faced difficulties in implementing SBA because of the recording.

Mae reported that SBA does not have exact guidelines for the teachers to follow, she explained:

OK, hmm ... uh ... I am sorry to say that the marking or scoring of SBA that the teachers keyed in the system, the teachers don't even do any teaching or really assessing the students' work. They were merely giving the students' scores as they like. So, to me, the progress in the recording is not the real progress of the students. *(Mae/11/06-15/L123-127)*

Mae added that there are also no specific dates or a schedule for her to conduct SBA in the classroom. She said:

Uhm ... no they isn't any, and from what I see, most of the teachers they don't have any plans and they don't take the time or have the specific time allocated for conducting SBA. From my observations, when it is requested that we need to do SBA report (scoring/ records), that is when teachers rush to do it. *(Mae/11/06-15/L138-L143)*

Therefore, with the absence of proper guidance, Mae said that in her view, the teachers in her school randomly select assessment instruments from any resources they can easily find (mainly worksheets) without examining them or determining whether they have even taught the lesson. Also, without specific guidance, Mae said that she learned to conduct SBA with the help of colleagues:

So clearly, I evaluate my students throughout my lessons with them, from the tests that I conducted, the examinations that they sat, their behaviour, their responses in the lesson I taught, from the reading activities that they do and from the task that I gave to them. That's how I do it. Just like that. *(Mae/11/06-15/L158-L161)*

There were also issues about the differences between the scores the teachers give their students and the ones the officers are expecting the student to achieve (in terms of level performances). For example, Anna commented that the scores the teachers gave were often questioned by the

education officers. They were questioned when the scores were lower than what the officers had targeted. For instance, when the teachers gave band 2 or 3 (see Appendix D and scoring criteria, Section 1.5.5), the officers claimed that the students should be getting 5 or 6 instead.

Anna explained that some schools like hers are located in outskirts areas. This means that schools can only be reached by a three- or four-hour drive from the nearest town, going through some very rough, steep, slippery roads during the monsoon seasons or dry and dusty ones during the dry season. She added that students who attend these schools are children who are not exposed to any English language. It is for this reason that she gives scores according to what her learners are able to do, which are not expected by the officers. According to Anna, the officers will say:

“Why are the results like these?” “Do you ever teach?”
and if we get the same result, the same scores and only with little improvements, they seem to push us to get better results. This make us feel like we don’t get to have the choice in giving the scores that the learners can and able to do. We feel pressured, especially when you don’t really understand what SBA is and having only little knowledge about it.
(Anna/11/07-15/L262-267)

Dennis reported the same thing, mentioning that the officers start asking why this particular student can only achieve this band level and not higher than what Dennis has scored and recorded. He also mentioned that it was not only the scoring which was the issue but also the reporting of SBA. He said that parents still do not understand how their children perform under the SBA system.

The issue about scoring and recording was also mentioned by the education official when I interviewed her. Specifically, she mentioned the 'band' system and the documents. First, she explained that Level One (Year 1–3) curriculum documents, when the system was introduced in 2011, were separated from the assessment document. According to the official, these documents were prepared and designed by two different, separate departments. The curriculum documents consisted of all the learning standards or skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and language arts) which the teachers needed to teach. Based on her observation, the assessment document, which was prepared by the other department, labelled the learning standards (of the curriculum document) from bands 1 to 6. Also, some learning standards which were easy were labelled as band 6 and difficult ones as band 1. She also noticed that the teachers would skip teaching and assessing learning standards labelled as bands 1 and 2 and would instead concentrate on teaching and assessing learning standards labelled 3 to 6. The official said:

Learning standard actually consists of each skill, whether it is easy or difficult, you have to teach, you have to incorporate in the lesson. You cannot be teaching the language skills, I mean the difficult ones, and leave out the easier ones. Actually, I would say all skills are important, they should not be regarded that this skill as easy and this skill is not easy, because if you come up with the lesson, you know of course, you know, when you have some activities you don't just go into something which is very difficult. It is like you have a mix and match kind of skills, right. (co/09-16/L96-L103)

Since teachers seemed to be having some difficulties in implementing the formative assessment in schools, the officer said the curriculum document and assessment had now been integrated into one document for Level Two

(Years 4–6, as in the Year Five class in Chen's classroom) in 2014 (see, Appendix B). Both the curriculum and the assessment documents had also now been designed by only one department in the Ministry of Education (and not separate departments, as before). The band system had also been changed to 'Level' 1 to 6 (instead of using 'Band' 1 to 6). The learning standards have added descriptors, so the teachers have to teach all the skills without skipping any of them:

The teachers have to teach to all the learning standards, and each learning standard it is provided with descriptors. The learning standards have up to six levels. Level one says something like this, and level two says something like this for each learning standard. Teachers by hook or by crook have to teach.
(co/09-16/L121-125)

The officer further mentioned changes made to levels for the KSSR and SBA document:

We noticed that one or two learning standards are too heavy for the teachers to teach in the lesson. So we decided to divide it into maybe two or three learning standards. And this time, we have the formative assessment in-built in the document, so we had to prepare a descriptor for each learning standard.
(co/09-16/L148-143)

Based on this discussion, the official admitted that the issues teachers face with respect to scoring of SBA are also related to the way the curriculum and assessment was designed when it was first introduced in 2011 (see, Figure 3 and 4 KSSR and SBA for Year One and Two are separated; Year 4 both documents are integrated as in Appendix B). As mentioned, some adjustments had been made with the introduction of the KSSR and SBA to Year Four in 2014; however, during the time this study was conducted, from

2015 to 2016, Chen's opinion was that teachers think that SBA is all about clerical work.

Liz's headmaster, for example, said that the teachers' workload had increasingly become too much and that they also had to commit to other administrative work. According to Liz's headmaster, the teachers had to spend time doing the recording when they were required to enter the scores into the system. He added that some teachers also had little knowledge about technology and about how to key the scores into the system. So it took a considerable amount of time for teachers to record the SBA scores. As such, it was unlikely that the teachers were able to concentrate on preparing a well-planned lesson:

Yes, I can't deny about the challenges that teachers are facing in the implementation of SBA, because teachers today are more given the focus to the filing system. (*Liz's headmaster/11/07-15/L232-L234*)

He added:

Teachers are given the responsibilities on so many things, you know. That is the reason, when I give teachers things to do in school, I have to look into the current situation and avoid giving too much activities. (*Liz's headmaster/11/07-15/L244-248*)

Daniel also mentioned that since the introduction of SBA, things have been quite challenging for him. He says that it is not only that he has to deal with managing his mixed ability classroom, but he also has to focus on and complete all sorts of administrative tasks. He feels that it is difficult for him to divide his time between both tasks. He says:

As the head of the English panel, I have to do reports and set up each of the students' profiles. And it is not

just about the students, but also doing all sorts of schools' activities, and I am also the head 'information communication and technology' teacher. So there are so many documentations and filings, it's all about filings. So sometimes I'm tangled with the task. Sometimes, in a week, there is two or three times I wouldn't be able to enter the classroom. So, sometimes the students are neglected. (*Daniel/11/07-15/L43-L50*)

Based on the discussion above, despite the fact that the teachers clearly had difficulties in meeting the requirement to give scores and to record and report learners' achievements. They faced challenges to their judgement in scoring learners' performance, compared to the scores expected by education officers. They also faced other difficulties, such as excessive workloads.

5.1.4 Interference of other reform initiatives

Despite the fact that teachers were required to implement SBA as mandated, other reforms were also being introduced at the same time as SBA and the KSSR English language curriculum. The teachers in my study mentioned that SBA is a good initiative. Dennis in particular stated that the education system is moving in the right direction to help lessen the pressure of examinations amongst the teachers, parents and learners. However, like Dennis and many other teachers, I had the opportunity in interviews to discuss the LINUS programme. The teachers in this study said that LINUS has good intentions, but it does not help with the implementation of SBA in primary school. Dennis complained that while SBA is meant to lessen the effect of testing on the learners, LINUS focuses on students passing the test

designed by the ministry, which is conducted twice a year. The LINUS programme must also be delivered during the lesson.

Su shared her story in this regard, saying that the LINUS programme is meant to reduce the amount of illiteracy in Malaysian public primary schools. She explained that the test is designed by the ministry and is administered twice a year. The English language LINUS test consists of two sections: the listening-speaking and the writing sections. Before the actual test, a screening test is conducted at the beginning of the year in each level, to screen learners who have difficulties in learning. The learners with such difficulties will be separated in the class and will be taught with the LINUS module prepared by the ministry, whereas the mainstream will be taught according to the curriculum syllabus. However, all students in the class will have to undergo the LINUS test. She added that the thing with the LINUS test is that most students in the classroom have not been taught the information in the test. So the teachers have to take some time to teach the content of the test to the whole class before administering either the screening paper test or the actual one. Su said she does this at least a few times before she feels the students are ready to sit for the test. Chen also mentioned this in her journal when she said:

The month-long screening for reading and writing is putting a heavy strain on me. I chose the unconventional style for assessing. I taught them first, and then assess them. I know all the other teachers are assessing the children straightaway, and view my methods as 'cheating'. I don't mind. For me, it is unfair to assess these children what you have not taught in the class before. (*chen/journal3/10-15*)

I wanted to get more information from Su. So I asked how she managed the LINUS programme, SBA and the new KSSR English curriculum in her classroom:

Of course it's hard and tough, because we have to give attention to these two groups of learners during the teaching and learning. I feel that it is quite challenging. It needs proper attention that none of them are left out from being taught the LINUS module.
(Su/11/06-15/L461-L463)

Su expressed more about her feelings on the LINUS programme, saying that she hoped there would be a specific teacher who could teach the LINUS group of learners, so special attention could be given to them. She said:

It's because when the mainstream and LINUS group are mixed together, it is really interrupting the learning for both groups. When you are giving the attention to one group, the other would start calling you for help too. How do you cope with explaining to one particular group and explaining another task or learning to another group? It is chaotic, you know. It is difficult. The learners, you know, they always need that proper guidance from you. (Su/11/06-15/L475-478)

Another example is a conversation I had with Dennis. He mentioned the LINUS programme during the first meeting I had with him, commenting that with LINUS in the education system, the teaching and learning seem to go back to square one. He added that this is no different from examination-based teaching:

SBA and LINUS in the education system do not harmonise. We have SBA [which] clearly informs us about an assessment conducted in the teaching and learning process. LINUS, on the other hand, focuses on the student to pass the test constructed by the Ministry to achieve zero percentages of national illiteracy. (den/MN1/07-15/L10-L14)

During my fieldwork, I saw LINUS officers visiting Chen and Liz's schools. I also attended the LINUS meeting at Liz's school. Before the meeting, one of Liz's colleagues told me that for several weeks, the teachers in the school had been preparing the LINUS files and documentation for the officers' visit. So the teachers and I had been looking forward to the meeting and what these officers would be commenting on. I noted in my personal notes that:

I had been eager to hear what they had to say. I entered the room with full of excitement and hoping to get information. As I went in, I felt the intensity among the teachers and the officers. I was told it was supposedly to be a friendly visit, an informal visit to work with the teachers on how they could improve the LINUS programme in the school. I felt that the meeting was more of making the teachers feeling guilty about their implementation of the LINUS programme and the way the teachers conducted the test and the teaching for the LINUS learners. (*personalnotes/LizLinus/07-15*)

In my interview with Liz's headmaster, he commented on the officers' visit to his school:

I usually don't really like to comment on visit conducted by any district or state's officers, but like recently, the LINUS visit by these officers was supposedly to 'supervise and help' teachers. It's a nice attention actually. (*Liz's headmaster/11/07-15/L450-L453*)

He commented that the way the officers communicated with him and his teachers was not helping the school:

The things that they should say is 'it's supposed to be done like this' or 'this one is lacking, it should be done like this'. Instead they came and started asking, '*Why is this not being done? Why the school is not...?*' Don't ask why, the word why is not good to be said. They should be saying 'since you don't have this, so hopefully you will have one of this next time'. They come and seem they are looking for faults, not offering

the help we need. (*Liz's headmaster/11/07-15/L453-L455*)

Dennis also mentioned the fact that the officers who are responsible for running and monitoring the LINUS programme sometimes do not even know how to help with problems or have the skills to understand the programme being mandated. But then he added that most of them (the officers) are only doing what they are told to do.

The LINUS programme seems to be an obstacle for teachers in implementing SBA. It is not just the test which adds a burden for teachers but also the fact that the LINUS programme has to be implemented in the classroom during the teaching and learning process. This makes it difficult for the teachers to focus on the implementation of SBA in their daily teaching. The teachers are also struggling with teaching the LINUS module and preparing the students for its tests. It also seems that there is tension between what the teachers are doing with the LINUS programme and what the officers are expecting the teachers to do.

5.1.5 Monitoring of SBA

Another obstacle facing the implementation of SBA, as the teachers reported, is the monitoring of SBA. Even though the teachers are required to record the scores three times a year and provide a report to the District Education Department, there was no feedback or monitoring conducted during the time this study was conducted.

For example, Liz reported that SBA had not been carefully monitored; nor was there any emphasis on the teachers with respect to implementing SBA in their classrooms. When I asked Liz's head teacher how he monitors the implementation of SBA in his school, he explained that he monitors SBA through meetings held after each summative assessment (conducted two or three times a year). In the meeting, he claims that they discuss how individual student learning can be developed and other problems that the teachers may have with SBA and how they can improve the programme. When I asked about observing teachers in the implementation, Dennis's head teacher explained that some teachers preferred not to be observed while they conduct their lessons. Therefore, asking the teachers about their SBA progress in their school meetings is considered enough.

Similarly, I asked the ministry official how they conducted the monitoring of the SBA implementation. I also wanted to find out how often they monitor the implementation of SBA in the Malaysian primary schools. The official said:

OK, like this, because, I mean, not many of us are in the Ministry, but we have, you know, we get assistant from JPN (State Education Department) and PPD (District Education Department) as well as, you know, IPG (Teachers' Training Institute), lecturers, you know, actually we cannot be doing this alone, but we are getting, you know, assistant from JPN, PPD, because we cannot monitor every school nationwide. (co/09-16/L284-L289)

The officer added:

So JPN and PPD have to carry out the monitoring, and that we do not keep tracks, because there are hundreds of PPDs and divisions, but from time to time in the meeting they are, I mean, the Ministry always remind them to do monitoring in the classroom and so on. (co/09-16/L289-L293)

Even though head teachers and officials reported monitoring the SBA implementation, the way such monitoring is conducted (e.g. through meetings and questions about how it is progressing but without officials observing it directly) may also affect the teachers' willingness and ability to implement it.

5.2 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the issues which may constrain the implementation of SBA among primary school teachers in Malaysia. The following summarises the impact of these issues on SBA for teachers involved in the implementation, within the aims of the English language curriculum and within the Malaysian primary school education system.

1. *SBA and the Malaysian primary school teachers:* The three main teachers in this study are strong supporters of the SBA, as are the other four teachers (although not as strongly as Liz, Chen and Dennis). SBA is a highly respected initiative, as reported by the three teachers and also demonstrated in the way the education official, in my interview with her, explained the importance of formative assessment. However, the discussion above (with respect to the training, examination expectations, scoring and recording, the expectations of other reform initiatives and the monitoring of SBA) shows that SBA is not implemented in the teachers' classrooms in the way anticipated by the Ministry (use of worksheets, focus on writing elements).

2. *SBA and the English language curriculum:* The aim of the English language curriculum is to 'enable learners to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts that is appropriate to the pupils' level of development' (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 1). The introduction of SBA is to help further the aims of the English language curriculum through providing different samples of assessment activities provided in the teachers' guidebook (e.g. oral presentations, drama). However, the evidence from the practices of the teachers in this study showed a greater focus on the writing elements of the English language compared to any of the other receptive skills (listening, speaking or even reading) because writing was easiest to assess and to give scores.
3. *SBA and the Malaysian primary school:* The teachers and the schools still rely on summative assessment to report students' achievements and performance, and they also focus on conducting summative assessment rather than formative assessment. The examination is still considered important and relevant for reporting children's progress to their parents.

This chapter illustrates further how east Malaysian teachers are implementing SBA and the factors that may affect their willingness and ability to implement it. The following chapter discusses the key findings of the study in relation to my research questions, to the relevant literature and to education policy in the country.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The accounts in the previous two chapters illustrate how the teachers in this study implemented and made sense of the SBA policy with which they were required to work. The previous chapter also presented the contextual factors which affected their implementation of the Malaysian primary school SBA. In this chapter, I discuss the extent to which the teachers' practices were congruent with the SBA principles and look at the factors behind teachers' practices, particularly the beliefs which underpinned those practices.

6.1 Beliefs about SBA

This section discusses the teachers' beliefs and how these beliefs led them to feel that they were implementing SBA in their classrooms. Before I proceed, I should state that I am well aware of the possible criticism of this type of research, where the data elicited may not constitute the 'teachers' principled rationales but rather post hoc rationalisation (i.e. explanation constructed retrospectively)' (Orafi and Borg, 2009, p. 250). However, I am confident that the teachers I interviewed and observed from different schools articulated their beliefs honestly and presented similarly honest accounts of their experiences, for the following reasons. As discussed in my methodology chapter, I began with a preliminary interview with each teacher, followed by a one-month spent in each school, observing and interviewing other teachers and being involved in the school's activities, besides conducting classroom observations and post-observation interviews. After

the data were put into themes, I returned to the teachers a year later to share and validate my findings and to allow the teachers to explain further their own beliefs and actions regarding SBA. In other words, I applied a member-checking 'dialogic approach', as suggested by Harvey (2014). Harvey explains that a 'dialogic approach' goes beyond the method described (in Lincoln and Guba) and involves the participants further in the research process through a series of dialogues, thus providing rigour and trustworthiness for the study itself (refer to discussion in Section 3.10.1).

Secondly, the participants involved in this study only represent a small number of primary school English language teachers (Liz, Chen, Dennis, Mae, Su, Daniel and Anna) and a focus study on three teachers (Liz, Chen and Dennis). The information elicited from these teachers may not represent the whole population of teachers in Malaysia. However, I am convinced that the information I gathered from these participants provides valuable information about the current situation regarding the implementation. The teachers' encounters with SBA are also quite similar to those of teachers in the findings from other studies investigated and conducted in Malaysian primary schools regarding SBA (e.g. Sardereh and Saad, 2013; Fook and Sidhu, 2010, 2016; Chan et al. 2006; Veloo et al. 2015; Mansor et al. 2013; Quyen and Khairani, 2016; Jaba, 2013; Kamarulzaman, 2013; Othman et al. 2013). As such, other teachers may also share a similar awareness and similar practices to those of the teachers in this study in relation to their pedagogical knowledge and beliefs about SBA.

One of the objectives of this study was to investigate teachers' knowledge and pedagogical beliefs of SBA. Specifically, they were questioned about the following: the reason SBA was being introduced; what they knew about SBA; how they understood it; what they were asked to do about SBA and how they put it into practice. This was investigated during their initial interviews, as outlined in the methodology chapter. For effective implementation of SBA, it is important that teachers should be aware of the reasons for its introduction, its principles and the underlying values of conducting such a form of assessment. Outlined in the following discussion are the teachers' beliefs about SBA, which are linked to their claims that they were implementing SBA in their classrooms despite the contextual factors affecting their SBA implementation (see, Chapter 5).

6.1.1 It develops students' potential

The teachers are aware that SBA helps to develop student potential. I provide an example of Liz's interview when I asked her what is the reason for the introduction of SBA. In reply she answered that SBA enables to see each individual potential. The potential in terms of the learning skill they need to acquire. The teachers do not move on to another level of learning in that particular skill until the pupils are able to acquire that skill. She gave an example, if she is teaching the writing component and the pupils are required to achieve certain writing structure, if they are able to write as expected during the assessment they would be able to move to another writing level and if not she would continue teaching the same level of writing skills. This means that the teacher move forward with the students in her

teaching following, assisting them and developing their level of performance to the level they are able to achieve or more. They believe that with SBA, the students no longer only listen to the teachers and the teachers do not just rush to finish the syllabus but both should participate more actively in the classroom activities, since both the KSSR English language curriculum and SBA are built to be more student-centred and less exam-oriented (Liz, Chen and Dennis). In their continuous assessment of students, the teachers believe that SBA enables them to note the strengths and weaknesses of each and every student, since students are given the opportunity to contribute to classroom activities (through group work and pair work). This helps teachers recognise students' potential and, at the same time, helps students extend their natural talents in areas such as public speaking, singing, reading and so on. The previous system focused too much on standardised examinations (Hashim et al., 2013), which limits creative thinking. As we have seen (Section 4.2 and 4.3) both Chen and Dennis believe that SBA enables the students to become better thinking individuals. A similar perception, that SBA is more student-centred and less-exam oriented, was held by the other four teachers I interviewed for the study (Mae, Su, Daniel and Anna). They were also aware that SBA helps in developing a learner's potential.

6.1.2 It is enjoyable and interactive

The teachers believe that with SBA in the curriculum, teaching and learning is more fun and interactive, as pupils are able to participate more in class activities (Liz, Chen and Dennis). Teachers are also able to introduce many

new activities, since they are given more freedom of choice in terms of how they should assess their pupils (Chen). The teaching and learning environment is no longer merely chalk and board but is student-centred (Daniel). Group work and discussion enable students to show off their interests and potential (Dennis and Chen). Activities such as role play create the opportunity for students to create their own dialogue and situations based on the discussion topics, thus creating a more meaningful learning experience (Chen). Teachers are aware that SBA promotes speaking more than writing; pupils have more chances to practice their speaking skills through these SBA-based daily activities. Since the new assessment will reduce the pressure of exams, the teachers feel that the students will be happier and will enjoy learning more (Liz, Chen, Dennis, Daniel and Anna).

Even though four of the teachers were not followed through classroom observation in the study, Su, Daniel and Anna also claimed that since the introduction of SBA, their classroom teaching was more enjoyable. For example, Daniel claimed that he brings his guitar to his classroom and uses this approach to get his learners interested in the English lesson.

6.1.3 It promotes creative teaching and learning

Although the teachers feel that the new curriculum and SBA are overwhelming in terms of workload, they expressed the importance of using different methods to assess students' learning outcomes and ensure effective learning (Chen, Liz, Dennis and Daniel). They used colourful pictures or real objects to stimulate pupils' thinking through games they

incorporate into their teaching and learning and the continuous worksheets they provide for practice (Chen). The teachers are also aware that one goal of SBA is that 'no one will be left out' (Jaba, 2013); this makes them believe they need to monitor students' progress every day to ensure the effectiveness of every lesson (Dennis).

6.1.4 It develops fairness in teaching and learning opportunities

The teachers believe that SBA provides fairness in teaching and learning opportunities for their pupils. They are also aware that teaching and learning provides the opportunity to focus on pupils who need extra attention in their learning progress. The teachers also believe that the previously existing assessment based on examinations made for a tense teaching and learning atmosphere in the Malaysian English language classroom (Liz, Chen and Dennis). They believe that former teaching and learning methods, including assessment tasks, were planned and designed for learners who had the potential to excel in examinations (Liz). Consequently, teaching, learning and testing were mostly focused on these groups of individuals (Mohd Sofi, 2003).

The teachers expressed their understanding that one of the underlying principles of the Malaysian SBA involves the continuous monitoring of pupils' learning growth. Therefore, they believe each pupil will get fair treatment during teaching and learning opportunities from assessment conducted with appropriate guidance and feedback (Chen, Dennis and Daniel).

6.1.5 It improves teaching effectiveness and learning quality

The teachers in this study are also aware that SBA helps provide them with information and insights needed to improve teaching effectiveness and learning quality. They know that SBA encourages classroom assessment as an ongoing process. As such, they feel that learning in an SBA classroom is more meaningful to pupils, as they can obtain immediate feedback on their performance (Chen and Dennis).

The findings above align with the findings of Mansor et al. (2013), in which the teachers involved pointed out that SBA encourages personal growth, develops positive attitudes, enhances collaborative skills and promotes creative teaching and learning. Mansor et al. stated that the basic understanding of the characteristics of SBA in primary schools among Malaysian teachers had helped teachers to appreciate the move from an 'exam-oriented culture to a more relaxed and exam-free environment' (p. 104). A similar finding related to teachers' understanding of SBA among Malaysian teachers was identified in the study done by Chan et al. (2006). This was also demonstrated by the Hong Kong SBA Consultancy Team (2005), who stated that using SBA in teaching a language subject such as English includes providing stable and continuous pressure-free assessment, reducing the reliance on standardised examinations, improving test item reliability, reflecting students' ability, promoting leisure reading, fostering teaching, enforcing independent learning, facilitating learning autonomy and empowering teachers in the evaluation process.

Veloo et al. (2015) also agreed that teachers need to be knowledgeable about SBA, because they play a pivotal role in student assessment. The researchers added that teachers should also know how to conduct 'evaluation tests according to the band', as this is considered 'important in the process of teaching and learning as stated in the SBA objectives' (p. 201). The need for teachers to have clear knowledge and understanding in conducting assessments of students' learning was also emphasised by McMillan (2001) and Cheah (2010). As Brophy (1991) stated:

Where (teacher) knowledge is more explicit, better connected, and more integrated, they will tend to teach the subject more dynamically, represent it in more varied ways, and encourage and respond fully to student comments and questions. Where their knowledge is limited, they will tend to depend on the text for content, de-emphasise interactive discourse in favour of seatwork assignments, and in general, portray the subject as a collection of static, factual knowledge. (p. 352)

These studies show the importance of teachers' knowledge and understanding of SBA procedures and administration, based on the guidelines provided by the Malaysian Examination syndicate. In this study, the teachers' understanding and knowledge of the principles of SBA (and its underlying values) are also considered in the teachers' interpretations of SBA.

6.1.6 Beliefs about guidance throughout the assessment activity

The Malaysian SBA provides elements of value through the assessment conducted. For example, the constructive and meaningful feedback which teachers are expected to provide as part of the learning process can contribute to the pupils' learning progress (also echoed in the study of Black

and Wiliam, 1998, 'Inside the black box'). They contended that assessment for learning requires teachers and learners to use assessment to improve instruction and learning. It is about assessing learners' progress, providing them with feedback and deciding on the next step in the teaching and learning process. The hope is that, as a result, pupils are motivated to work harder and perform better in their learning and in their future in general.

Based on my observation, the teachers showed that feedback was associated with guidance which was provided throughout the assessment activity. As a type of guidance, the teachers employed SBA practices to promote learning via the use of scaffolding strategies. The linking of formative assessment with scaffolding or scaffolding in classroom teaching and the linking of scaffolding with feedback has been much discussed in the literature (e.g. Shepard, 2005; Wood et al., 1976; Shute 2007) involving supports that teachers provide to their students.

As discussed in Section 2.2.1, one of the most important features of scaffolding is defined as 'controlling those elements that are beyond the learners' capacity' (Wood et al., 1976, p. 70). Scaffolding includes 'supports that teachers provide to the learner during problem solving — in the form of reminders, hints, and encouragement — to ensure successful completion of a task' (Shepard, 2005, p. 66), within the learners' zones of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978)

Giving guidance and cues during scaffolding, as discussed in the process above, is also conventionally known as facilitative feedback. Chen demonstrated this activity in her practices with her Year Five classroom when she continuously prompted and hinted, with words and phrases to her pupils, about what to write on their written assessments. Liz also guided her Year One pupils during assessments by giving corrective information, that is, by telling them about and making them to do corrections, also known as directive feedback. Shute (2007) agrees that scaffolding in the form of facilitative feedback is useful for later stages of learning, as shown in Chen's Year Five classrooms. Directive feedback is useful for learners at an early stage of learning, illustrated by what Liz's students did in her Year One classroom. A similar finding was reflected in a study by Sardeh and Saad (2012), when they revealed that Malaysian teachers use scaffolding to ensure that assessment for learning is an interactive process between the teachers and the learners, aimed at improving educational performance.

Despite having insufficient training about SBA, the teachers in this study understands that assessment involve something that had been taught and learnt. For example in Chen's interview she stated that the pupils should only be tested when the teachers feel that the pupils are ready to be tested on the topic or learning skill that they have been taught and learnt. Chen said the curriculum emphasises the necessity of guidance for pupils. Thus, the teachers in this study consider guidance important. Chen believes that at the primary level, pupils need guidance throughout their assessment activity. Through giving guidance, the teachers believe pupils will be more active in

their learning as the teachers assist them in stimulating their thoughts. Chen also believes guidance was a missing factor in the examination system. The teachers were unable to provide the assistance the children needed during their assessment activity. This echoes Christodoulou (2014) statements about guidance in her book mentioned earlier. She stated the importance of guiding students in their learning because according to her 'new information without proper guidance does not lead to effective learning but instead leads to confusion, frustration and misconceptions' (p. 39) about what the students expected and supposed to do with any task given to them. The focus on examinations led teachers to teach 'to the test'. Therefore, an intense atmosphere developed in the classrooms, because teachers were simply providing more facts and information for pupils to memorise. In turn, some pupils were 'left out', because teachers would focus only on pupils with the potential to pass the examination, as discussed above and also as remarked by the ministry official.

Quyen and Khairaini (2016) discovered that the teachers they studied in Malaysia were capable of conducting assessment with feedback. However, there was no proof that the teachers' feedback was used in a critical way, for example, to use students' learning information to make further progress in their learning. A similar situation was identified in this study, even though the teachers provided feedback through guidance during the assessments, recorded the assessment results descriptively in their lesson plan books and recorded individual level scores at back page of the book to modify teaching and to accelerate learning. Liz and Chen gave some samples of their

reflections and assessment scores (see Appendix J and K). But there was no clear evidence of how the assessment activity helped with future teaching or adjustments to the teaching or how the students' learning was planned from the assessment results.

Much of the literature about assessment for learning or about formative assessment regards 'feedback' as the key aspect of formative assessment (e.g. Gipps, 1994; Sadler, 1998; Black and Wiliam, 1998; Brookhart et al., 2010; Jones, 2005). Feedback can be useful when information about a task and how to perform it more effectively could enhance self-regulation skills 1) when the teacher and student are involved actively, and feedback is not isolated from teaching and learning (even though feedback is not considered a teacher's primary endeavour) and 2) when both the teacher and the student understand how to use feedback (see to Table 1 in Section 2.2.1). For this reason, Quyen and Khairaini suggest that there is a need for future studies to focus on 'practical formative assessment activities to reconcile formative assessment theories within the Asian culture and conditions' (p. 161).

The teachers in this study expressed strong beliefs (as discussed above) about the value and practicality of SBA and some understanding of its underlying principles, based on their knowledge and understanding of what SBA is in classroom practice as well as the principles outlined with respect to formative assessment, echoed in Black and Wiliam (1998). The three main teachers in this study were strong supporters of SBA, yet failed to implement many of its tenets. The following discussion shows the reasons

the teachers deviated from some of the suggested practices recommended in the Malaysian primary school SBA guidelines.

6.2 Teachers' beliefs about themselves in conducting SBA

The teachers expressed doubts about their own ability to conduct SBA (see, Section 5.1.1). Chen, for example, cast doubts on her ability to understand SBA and the curriculum. She claimed that other teachers may also have problems in understanding SBA. Mae expressed similar views, stating that she did not know much about SBA, because she was simply asked to teach the KSSR curriculum and to incorporate SBA in her teaching and learning activities, without attending any related courses. The teachers' perceptions of their limited ability in implementing and interpreting SBA are clearly significant; they tended to avoid strategies or activities which could potentially cause problems. For example, Liz avoided using group work activities in all of her lessons or as part of her assessment practices, because according to her, she would lose proper control of her large class, which consisted of pupils who would often misbehave. Losing control of the classroom meant losing the pupils' attention and their ability to sit down quietly and listen to the lessons. Liz also admitted that her Year One classroom were mostly those who performed low in their literacy and numeracy test and she feels that they need more attention in their learning and her being in control in the classroom. However, Chen and Dennis preferred using group work prior to their assessment activities (group work is one of the suggested activity in the SBA) and believing that assessment

should be away from the knowledge of the learners by making learning more interactive and interesting. The reason that Chen preferred using group work because her classroom were much more smaller than Liz's which could be the reason she preferred group work in each of her lesson. Where as Dennis' classroom consists of pupils who performed better in their literacy and numeracy test which make it easier for him to give instructions for his activities in the classroom. To these teachers, smaller class size and better performing learners are easier to manage and making it easier for them to conduct activities such as the group work recommended in the SBA. However, larger class size with low performing learners in their literacy and numeracy skills are difficult to manage and making it difficult for the teacher to use group work activities such as in Liz's case.

According to Christodoulou (2014) the need of educational change of the twenty-first century often suggests ways of organising classrooms. For instance, in the Malaysian SBA some activities for assessment were suggested as follow (role play, group work, making puppets, creative writing). According to Christodoulou activities such as the above are alternatives to dull rote learning. She provided a number of case study this included one of her own experiences as suggested in the curriculum (see, Section 2.3.1, Point 3). This situation suggests despite being recommended list of activities in the new curriculum, teachers would tend to select activities that they believe are appropriate and meaningful for their students to be engaged on.

The teachers in this study reiterated that their ability to conduct SBA was one of the challenges which limited their practice of the assessment forms, as a result of the lack of exposure during the SBA's introduction. A similar opinion was revealed in the implementation of the Malaysian PPSMI, as discussed in the literature review, in which teachers' competencies, knowledge and abilities were lacking. However, based on Christodoulou discussion above Liz may have avoided other assessment activities suggested in the SBA not just because the lack of ability and training issues. It was also about her believing that teaching something that involve group work is taking the pupils' time away from what is important in the topic as what Liz commented that using group work 'will disrupt her lesson and losing control of the classroom'. This is because planning a group work activity is not just about what assessment activity is considered appropriate for the lesson but also involving the process of managing behaviours in such limited time in the English language classroom for the pupils to achieve the learning target as expected. To Liz, delivering her lesson would be much more effective while her students are silent and controlled. This she believes would help them to gain a clear understanding of the new knowledge she is teaching and which they could reproduce in the assessment task later on.

Fullan (2001) warned that readjusting one's beliefs is not easy, as it involves 'the core value held by individuals regarding the purpose of education' (p. 44). Henceforth, teachers experiencing change must have proper guidance, because they may not know what needs to be changed or how to go about it (Fullan and Steigebauer, 1991).

6.3 Beliefs about assessment of speaking and writing

The main aim of the curriculum is to promote pupils' speaking skills in the English language. This study shows that in spite of the teachers' awareness of the speaking component in the curriculum, they demonstrated little evidence of assessing that component in their practice. The only evidence that the teachers conducted speaking assessment was during the Linus programme test, which was prepared and provided by the Ministry of Education. The teaching and assessment of speaking skills is often a neglected activity in the Malaysian classroom, with teachers putting more emphasis on reading and writing skills, because these are the skills most tested in public examinations. The ministry official admitted this during my interview with her. Thus, teachers tend to cover speaking skills in their lessons only when they are required to do so (as shown in the LINUS programme test).

Teachers in this study claimed that they were assessing speaking skills when they asked questions in the classroom. Liz, for instance, said that when she asked particular pupils to identify a particular picture or word, and her pupils were able to respond correctly, she felt she was teaching and assessing speaking skills. However, I did not notice this kind of assessment during my observation of her.

A similar situation arose in a study conducted in a Cyprus English language secondary teaching context (Tzagari, 2011), in which teachers were not employing the communicative methodology introduced into their education

system, because they thought that it was incompatible with the principles underlying examinations. However, the teachers in Tsagari's study stated that if examinations had not been so important they would have employed the methodology suggested for their teaching and learning.

The belief of teachers in this study that writing assessment is of greater importance than speaking assessment is a reflection of what they were used to doing with the previous examination system. The training provided for the new curriculum and SBA was insufficient and therefore failed to develop the teachers' deep awareness of the importance of promoting speaking elements as the main objectives of the KSSR English curriculum and of emphasising speaking skills in their assessment practices. Consequently, the teachers in this study failed to recognise the value of the speaking elements of the curriculum. This echoed Kagan's (1992) statement that not only do teachers' beliefs influence their practices, but these beliefs are also relatively stable and resistant to change. This means that if teachers do not value what a change can bring to their teaching, the change is unlikely to take effect. As Day asserts:

When change is demanded, it has been pointed out that 'teachers change or do not change' according to whether the proposed transformation is 'within their intellectual and emotional capacity', and also 'appropriate to their personal, educative and ideological perspectives and the context in which they work'. (1998, cited in Pike, 2002, p. 40).

6.4 Belief that assessment involves the ability to memorise what is learned

The teachers in this study expressed the belief that assessment involves mainly the ability to memorise what is learned. This finding was significant throughout my observations and interviews with Liz and Dennis. In Liz's lesson, she continuously conducted repetition exercises with words, phrases and sentences. She stated that it is important for her to help her students to continuously review what was learned in the previous lessons because, according to her, the pupils will remember easily when they do the assessments later. Similarly, Dennis thinks memorisation is important for learning vocabulary, but he added that memorisation activities should be conducted in a fun way. Thus, all his lessons during my observation incorporated memorisation activities (repetition and drilling of words and phrases). He said that whenever his pupils were required to write in the assessment, they were able just to use the words, phrases or sentences that they had remembered and memorised.

Associating assessment with memorisation was seen in a study conducted by Au and Entwistle (1999), in which it was discovered that Chinese students were prone to using rote memorisation. The same tendency was identified in studies done by Biggs (1996), Samuelowicz (1987) and Kember and Gow (1996) in China. These researchers found that despite Chinese students being passive and less interactive in the classroom, their levels of achievement were relatively high in examinations at Western universities. According to Marton et al. (1997), the combination (memorisation with

attempts to understand) used to prepare for examinations is seen by Chinese students as normal, because 'having an understanding of something implies memory, just as (meaningful) memory implies understanding' (p. 32). Similarly, the teachers in this study believe in associating assessment with memorisation to develop an understanding of something which has been learned and in applying this understanding in the assessment. Liz said that when her students memorised particular words or phrases with repetitive drilling activities, they would eventually understand and remember, making it easier for them to answer the assessment questions. However, Hubbard (1997) contended the set back of memorised responses in the context of her statistical classroom. She stated that for memorisation strategy to work requires that learners will receive the same set of questions that they mastered during the process of teaching and memorisation. This is because according to Hubbard learners will have the difficulties in 'applying their knowledge to real problems outside the statistics class which are never stated in textbook form and that students quickly forget procedures that they have learned but not understood' (p. 3). However, writer of the *Seven Myths about Education*, Daisy Christodoulou's (2014) first myth about education is that 'fact prevents understanding'. She said that memorizing fact is important and so it is too with the memorizing what is learnt and to be tested because according to her 'if we want pupils to have good conceptual understanding, they need more facts, not fewer' (p. 20). This indicates that the teachers in this study believe when it is about assessment there is no other way but to memorise what is learnt and taught. They believe through experience by helping their pupils to memorise the

words, phrases and sentence patterns are important prior to assessing. As Spillane et al. (2003) state, 'what individuals make of new information has much to do with their prior knowledge, expertise, values, beliefs, and experiences' (p. 393).

Liz in this study believes that from her teaching and learning experiences memorisation strategy or activities help her learners to do assessment better and that she believes there is a relationship between assessment and the ability to memorise information which is learned. By acquiring facts it can help pupils build and develop their background knowledge (while memorising times table, memorising important historical dates/year, memorising how to structure sentences in language learning etc.) is important for both present and future learning and for pupils to be able to survive, be adaptive and innovative in the world that is rapidly changing (Christodoulou, 2014).

Opell and Aldridge (2015) revealed that the teachers they studied in Abu Dhabi were willing to comply with their reform initiative (which required the teachers to change their teaching approaches in line with twenty-first century skills, a constructivist approach). However, the teachers continued to hold more traditional beliefs about their role in the classroom and their philosophy of teaching and learning acquisition. Interviews and observations showed that culture, fear, a lack of knowledge and understanding by teachers and incongruent interpretations impeded the implementation of their curriculum initiatives.

The teachers in this study could also be using memorisation strategy because as mentioned in this study, it is typical in Asian culture to associate examinations with memorisation or learning 'by heart' (Levinsohn, 2007), because of the importance of examinations in the Asian context. Examinations and assessment are both known to help teachers identify how well a particular learner has been progressing in his or her learning; therefore, it is not surprising here that teachers would apply memorisation for assessments in their practice. This belief in the traditional role of teaching-learning and assessment expressed by the teachers in this study (about memorization) had been experienced from generation to generation upheld by the culture and later passing it on to the students.

6.5 Beliefs about the use of worksheet activities

Although the SBA lists some samples of assessment activities for teachers to work with, in this case, the teachers in this study used worksheets as the most predominant way of assessing their pupils. In Liz's lesson, for example, she gave her pupils one worksheet after another, working from the belief that worksheets provide her with an easier way to see and respond to her pupils' learning progress — what has been taught versus what has been learned. Dennis stated that worksheets were his 'ultimate' (in his own word) form of assessment, but they were more for his own use in evaluating the effectiveness of his teaching approaches. Chen designed her worksheets using colourful and decorative templates. She said the worksheets were to hide the fact that they were being assessed.

As discussed earlier, teachers emphasise the planning and designing of writing assessments rather than of other skills in the curriculum. Thus, it is not surprising that the teachers in this study were more prone to giving worksheets than any other of the suggested assessment activities in the guidebook. Despite Liz, Chen and Dennis being strong supporters of the SBA initiative, since they had had little exposure to SBA, they had to turn to practices with which they were most familiar. This was evident in Anthony and Walshaw (2007), who discovered that neither of the mathematics teachers they studied, who enacted the national numeracy policy in a New Zealand context, showed any sign of resistance to the change. Yet they enacted the policy in quite different patterns, demonstrating different approaches in the way they delivered their lessons, sometimes not aligning with what the policy intended. Mansor et al. (2013) produced similar findings in which certain teachers in Malaysia showed they were committed to implementing SBA and revealed no signs of rejection amidst the challenges they encountered with the initiatives. The teachers in their study delivered their lessons in an interesting way despite the 'teething trouble' they reported.

The practices of the teachers in this study are in line with the descriptions of Trumbull and Lash (2013) and Black and Wiliam (1998) with respect to formative assessment as they stated there is no single prescription for what formative assessment should look like; it can include any activities undertaken by the teachers which may provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are

engaged. The teachers in the study relied on worksheets as they chosen form of assessment.

The worksheets determined the teachers' next steps as far as what to teach; they helped identify pupils' learning abilities and aided in the evaluation of the teachers' teaching strategies. Most of all, the worksheets were identified by these teachers as the easiest way for them to plan and design for assessment and to incorporate it into their teaching-learning activity. School contexts, organisational structures, the social environment and the historical context are all important factors which shape teachers' sense-making with respect to a new curriculum policy (Spillane, 2002). This observation suggests that curriculum change requires supportive structures (e.g. ways to utilise other assessment activities as recommended by the policy) which are favoured and agreed upon. Al-Sawafi (2014) also suggested in his study in the context of continuous assessment in Oman that it is important to study teachers' prior and existing beliefs, as well as other contextual factors, to understand teachers' practices and attitudes towards assessment reform. Understanding teachers' behaviour and the contextual factors affecting such reform initiative could help Ministries develop a means of support for the teachers in implementing the reform.

6.6 Summary

Based on the above discussion, this study showed that teachers' pedagogical beliefs were the most influenced factor that contributed the way the teachers' implemented SBA. This was evident in the way they adapted

SBA into their classrooms (e.g. the beliefs in giving guidance throughout assessment activities, scaffolding so learners could operate in their ZPD, associating guidance with feedback).

However, the teachers' existing pedagogical beliefs toward teaching, learning and assessment represented the challenges for implementing some of the recommended Malaysian primary school SBA. For example, the teachers in this study believe assessment involves the ability to memorise what is learnt where they apply teaching strategies such as drilling and repetition of words, phrases and sentence structures prior to the assessment. However, the introduction of SBA suggested a number of teaching activities to lessen Malaysian teachers rote teaching and learning (see, Appendix A). In another example, the Malaysian SBA also introduced variety of ways for the teachers to assess their pupils' performances. The three teachers in this study (including the four teachers) preferred and believed that worksheets were the way they should assessed their pupils. In addition, the introduction of SBA was also to create a balance in teaching and assessing all the teaching skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing; see, Section 1.3) and aim at focusing the speaking component of the English language (as discussed in Section 1.2.2, it is the most neglected skills taught and assessed). However, the teachers in this study believe the writing component of the language is important to be taught, practiced and assessed.

Despite the fact that SBA promotes multiple activities for the teachers to assessed their pupils' performances and that the teachers in this study held

strong pedagogical beliefs about SBA as well as having some understanding of its underlying principles, they remained with some existing pedagogical beliefs on teaching and assessment practices (Section 6.3 to 6.5). The contextual factors (the knowledge and training of SBA; the examination system; scoring, recording and reporting of SBA; interference of other reform initiatives and; the monitoring of SBA) discussed in this study were the main reasons for the teachers to retain with existing pedagogical beliefs and practices about teaching and assessment. Thus, prevented their willingness and ability to implement SBA as recommended and suggested in the SBA documents. I provide an example how these contextual factors hindered the teachers' implementation process of SBA and affected the teachers' strong held beliefs about SBA. Liz commented that as far as she had noticed, there had not been any monitoring done on SBA, even after a few years of its implementation, nor was there any emphasis on doing SBA in the classroom even though the Education Department required the yearly result to be submitted - but no further action was taken when the results were not submitted. Even if there was monitoring or encouragement to conduct SBA, it was usually done through meetings in the school. But although there were problems with SBA, there was not much discussion even in meetings, as admitted by her head teacher (see, head teacher and officials comment how monitoring of SBA is conducted in Section 5.1.5).

This discussion illustrates that there is not much emphasis from school and local education authorities on teachers conducting SBA in the classroom because of the loose way it is monitored. Head teachers and officers may

also think that simply conducting meetings to discuss the implementation of SBA is enough. In the absence of proper training in SBA, head teachers and officers may themselves not have the necessary knowledge and skills to monitor its implementation in the Malaysian primary classrooms.

Therefore, in making sense of the mandated SBA regardless the loose way it is being monitored the teachers in this study interpreted, altered, modified and implemented SBA using their pedagogical knowledge and beliefs and incorporating existing or prior teaching-learning and assessment practices, according to the needs of the Malaysian educational context. The overall findings of the study pointed to a limited uptake of SBA implemented in the Malaysian primary school system as it faced with major challenges. It is the reasons why the teachers in this study apply changes being imposed on them in ways which allow the curriculum to make sense in their teaching and learning context.

A study conducted by Rahman (2014) also found incongruence between teachers' practices and the expectations of the Malaysian primary school curriculum (the KSSR) where the teachers' teaching had focused and remained on examination preparation than on actual learning (or as suggested and recommended in the curriculum). She states:

Despite the fact that the curriculum focused on the development of students' ability to use the language appropriately, meaningfully and effectively, the teachers believed that learning meant providing as much facts and information (i.e. input) as possible and effective teaching was where students were able to remember that was being taught. There was no emphasis on whether students were able to achieve

and perform the desired skills and apply them in their daily life. (p.169)

Her study revealed the reasons behind her findings included teachers did not fully understand the content of the curriculum and the cascade training used to inform the Malaysian primary school teachers about the change was ineffective. Therefore, it is not surprising that the teachers in this study could also alleviated from the recommended practices of SBA and retained with some of the existing teaching and assessment practices because of the way the SBA training was carried out and introduced (see, Section 2.5 and Section 5.1.1).

The fact that teachers remained with existing pedagogical beliefs and practices in this study echoes Spillane's framework, the individual cognition element recognises that the development of new knowledge occurs through existing structures (e.g. teachers' existing knowledge and practices concerning teaching and learning). Spillane (2002) also emphasised that these structures need to be supported, or little may be achieved in terms of realising change (as discussed in Section 2.4.1). This also echoes Hayes (1995) suggestions, the teachers' existing beliefs or values which influence their practices are important to recognise in professional development programmes. Fullan and Steigebauer (1991) and Wedell (2003) also agree saying teachers experiencing change must have proper guidance, because they may not know what needs to be changed or how to go about changing it.

The reality for educational reform may not be implemented as intended is a phenomenon widely discussed in many existing studies (e.g. Harvey, 1999; Rahman, 2014; Al- Safawi 2014). The main evident reveals that the teachers' existing pedagogical beliefs and practices were not identified and confronted during the introduction of the change. This study may represent another example of a reform initiative which had failed to meet these needs. The evidences gathered in this study, show the importance to consider teachers' prior or existing beliefs about assessment and contextual factors to understand the motives behind the teachers' actual assessment practices and their attitude to assessment reforms. This could extend our current understanding of SBA and provides some implications to continuing research on English language teachers' beliefs about SBA in Asian context and elsewhere in general. The next chapter discusses these implications.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

The previous chapter presented the account of three primary school English language teachers and their actual practices of SBA within a range of contextual factors. To conclude the thesis, this chapter begins with the limitations of the study, outlines its educational contributions and delineates the implications of the study. I proceed with suggestions for further research with regards to SBA and end this chapter with some personal reflections on this study.

7.1 Limitations of the study

Although this study has yielded some significant findings about teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual practices with the SBA reform, I am aware of its limitations. As discussed in Section 6.1, the study only represents a small number of selected primary school English language teachers. It began with seven teachers selected for a preliminary interview and then focused on three teachers who claimed to be implementing SBA in their classrooms. The teachers in this study may not represent the whole population of primary school English language teachers. However, engaging with a smaller number of participants had allowed me to spend more time with the teachers, to build an atmosphere of trust and to mitigate undue influence on my part.

Although I tried my hardest to minimize my influence as a researcher, my presence may have affected what the teachers in the study had expressed in the interviews and during my observations with them. For example, when the teachers started talking, I could not stop myself from expressing my experiences with it or even agreeing with what the participants had to say. When I conducted my study with Chen for instance and as she started talking about the way SBA was conducted when it was first introduced to Years One and Two, she asked if I had been in one of the courses. I began telling Chen what my colleague and I did in order to understand SBA. I felt that this conversation might have affected the way Chen conducted her lesson, because she might have thought that I was there to evaluate and judge the criteria she would be observed on. Therefore, the teachers in the study might have acted upon the implementation of SBA and tried to present classroom assessment activities that they thought I wanted to see. I had also stated in the methodology chapter that Malaysian teachers are not used to being interviewed or observed by outsiders. Therefore, the teachers in this study might also not be implementing their usual classroom or assessment practices due to my role as a researcher.

Secondly, this study was conducted between mid June 2015 to June 2016 and after the course of this study the teachers' process of implementation of the SBA may have experienced some changes. This means that after June 2016 the teachers' practices of SBA may not be the same as what had been discovered in this study. For example, changes in terms of the primary school English language curriculum which may also affect changes in the

SBA guidebook and the scoring of the SBA may have already influence the way SBA is being implemented and may also affected the teachers' pedagogical beliefs about SBA. During my interview with the officer in the Ministry of Education, she stated that the Malaysian primary school Year One English language curriculum will undergo another change at the beginning of 2017. She also stated that some of the contents of the curriculum had been changed and some terms had been adopted in accordance with the change. Therefore, the findings of the study may only be valid for the period of the study (June 2015-June 2016). However, no research study can ever capture more than a stage in a reform process, so the findings may still be significant to those responsible for curriculum reform here and elsewhere, and for academics concerned to understand the processes of design and implementation of reform.

7.2 Contributions of the study

Despite the limitations discussed above, this study makes a number of contributions. This project presented evidence why Assessment for Learning or formative assessment do not always turn out as expected. The following section discusses how this study has contributed to our knowledge in the field of formative assessment and education reform. For example, in terms of the age of the learners in responding to feedback, the need to align formative assessment with summative assessment, for policy makers to understand that introducing a new initiative not only means introducing a new set of guidebooks, the need for curriculum reformers to decide and

prioritize which reforms are most important and the importance for curriculum reformers in recognizing and understanding the reasons for any potential mismatch between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices.

As we have seen, most of the existing literature about educational change and teachers' beliefs, about assessment reforms and teachers' pedagogical beliefs, about SBA or formative assessment and teachers' pedagogical beliefs focuses on the context of secondary or higher education where the learners are aged between thirteen and seventeen (teenagers as learners). As discussed in this study and the existing literature, the aim of formative assessment is to reveal learners' weaknesses and to help them progress through the feedback that the teacher gives – with the pupils responding to that feedback or information about their progress (William cited in Christodoulou, 2016). According to Christodoulou (2016) many of investigations revealed about feedback in secondary schools and the reason for the kind of feedback provided to fail is because the learners had argued that their teachers' feedback may have been accurate but it was not always helpful. This kind of feedback tells the learners what they have done wrong but it does not tell them how to help them. Even at the level of secondary education learners have difficulties in responding to the feedback about their progress using the information given to them. This study focuses on primary school education and deals with young learners aged between 7 and 12 years old. As discussed earlier, for formative assessment to work, the pupils themselves need to respond to the teachers' feedback or information about their progress. Considering the age of the learners (7-12 years old, young

learners) it might be difficult for pupils to respond to the feedback given to them at this age. Furthermore with the insufficient training the teachers of this study may have contributed to their inability to train pupils in how to respond to feedback given to them. Therefore, Sadler (1989) suggests that students need to be trained in how to respond to feedback and to recognise the characteristics of the work they produced and could produce in future. Sadler added, 'it can't be assumed that when students are given feedback they will know what to do' (p. 4).

Additionally, the literature discusses specific challenges regarding the competing roles of formative and summative assessments. This study provides continuous evidence of and reasons for both success and failure in the implementation of formative assessment, with a focus on the context of primary school education, and this evidence might apply in other educational contexts and in other subject areas as well. For example, in this study, parents' prioritization of examinations (also known as summative assessments) hindered teachers from using descriptive results to report to parents, since they might not have a clear understanding of what the formative results meant. Thus, the teachers were caught in a tension between the implementation of SBA and examinations. Moreover, it was not only the parents having difficulties in understanding the descriptive report. The teachers in the study also had problems articulating what formative assessment is. This could also be the reason why teachers preferred using grades to report students' performance. Summative results provide common or shared meaning (i.e. the grades that it produces through the end of year

examinations is understood to be reliable and provides consistency among all stakeholders). On the other hand, the formative system result (i.e. the descriptive result) produces consequences for the teacher and the pupil but loss of common or shared meaning and function among other stakeholders.

It is vital for educational policy makers within the Malaysian educational context to understand that introducing a new initiative not only means introducing a new set of syllabi, guidebooks or guidelines, but it also implies understanding what teachers think and understanding their behaviour with respect to the change as well as knowing their prior pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning. Wedell (2009) also stated that one of the requirements for successful reform depends not on what is written but on how people interpret and act upon what is written.

The LINUS programme reported in this study also indicates that it is the responsibility of education officials to ensure which reform initiatives are the most important for teachers to focus on. This will enable teachers to concentrate on and invest more time in learning and enhancing their competencies and abilities with respect to the change. As Wedell (2009) stated, introducing too many changes at once to the teachers and into the education system causes confusion.

In Al-Sawafi's (2014) study he stated that little research has been conducted about English language teachers' pedagogical beliefs about educational assessment innovations and how assessment is carried out in practice. This study addresses this gap and adds to the existing body of knowledge and

understanding about teachers' beliefs and the implementation of SBA reform, with a clear focus on the context of primary school education and how the implementation of educational reform is associated with many challenges. In addition, the lesson that could also be learnt from the findings of this study, as discussed in the previous chapter 6, is that taking for granted teachers' stated beliefs about formative assessment 'without looking at the extent of how these pedagogical beliefs are consistent and inconsistent with the teachers' practices may provide inaccurate interpretation' for curriculum reformers (Al-Sawafi, 2014, p. 221) of how formative assessment is implemented in practice. This study showed some incongruence between teachers' pedagogical beliefs about SBA and their actual practices. This highlights the importance for curriculum reformers in recognizing and understanding the reasons for any potential mismatch so they can implement the reform more effectively. This study not only provides detailed insight into the role of teachers' pedagogical beliefs, but it also provides insights into the contextual factors which shape how the teachers implement SBA in (real) practice and also hinder teachers from implementing SBA reforms in ways which are consistent with their stated beliefs. Studying these elements (teachers' pedagogical beliefs, actual practices and contextual factors) provides information with regards to the success and failure of the SBA reform and other assessment innovations in general. This is because according to Borg (2003) 'teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs' (p. 81). Therefore, it is important to ask

teachers what they think about new educational reforms. Such information may provide a window into their beliefs and understanding concerning effective pedagogy.

The theoretical contributions of this study is an understanding on the complex relationship between a reform initiative (the introduction of SBA) and the teachers' strong held pedagogical beliefs about SBA the interference of multiple contextual factors affecting the teachers' 'pedagogical behaviour, resulted in educational style manifested, conception of the educational process and the use of certain methods' (Mihaela and Alina-Oana, 2015, p. 1). Mihaela and her colleague suggested 'self-reflection on professional identity' is a powerful vehicle in changing 'teachers' beliefs about their own pedagogical behaviour' through 'restructuring' (p. 1004) what they already know, believe and what the reform intended for them to do. This means by restructuring could result in a flexible, appropriate, innovative teaching-assessment in accordance to the teachers' teaching and assessment context. This study may also contribute as a base towards the direction of this research as suggested by Mihaela and colleague.

Finally, most of the studies conducted about SBA in Malaysia that I used as cross-references in previous chapters are small-scale studies, mostly about explorations of teachers' perspectives and their acceptance of SBA but little about the teachers' practices, as far as I am aware. The latest study about educational innovation in Malaysia, conducted by Rahman (2014), is on the reformed KSSR primary school English language curriculum. Her study

indicates that high stakes examinations (summative assessment) was one of the issues which affected teachers' implementation of the KSSR reform (i.e. the teachers' teaching focus is on the written component because this is what is assessed). The present study signifies a continuation of research on the issue of assessment, specifically SBA reform (as an alternative to examination) in the Malaysian primary school education system. As discussed earlier, the SBA reform was designed to help achieve the KSSR aim in enhancing pupils' English language communicative skills. This study comprises an in-depth exploration of teachers' pedagogical beliefs, their actual assessment practices (with SBA) and the factors influencing their implementation of SBA. The study reveals that the teachers' teaching and assessment (even after introduction of SBA) they still emphasises on the written component.

Therefore, this present study could be of great value to the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, in the context of primary school in understanding the reasons for teachers' practices with SBA and how they do it (in terms of SBA) with young primary school English language learners. It may also have cross-national implications, because as reported by other researchers, similar tensions are being found between formative and summative assessments. For example, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013) stated the struggle with competing formative and summative functions of assessment is mostly related to the pressure of high-stakes accountability system and the fact that schools are judged by

how well their students perform on summative examination (e.g. SATs and GSCEs in England, UPSR and SPM in Malaysia, HKDSE in Hong Kong).

7.3 Implications of the study

In addition to its contribution to educational research in general, this study suggests several implications for English language SBA in Malaysia, mainly for the curriculum reformers or the Ministry of Education, teachers' educators, and primary school English language teachers.

7.3.1 Implications for curriculum reformer or the Ministry of Education

Education officials need to consider if formative assessment could be used with learners age between 7-12 years old. The literature revealed that feedback is the linchpin for formative assessment and in order for formative assessment to work the learners need to respond to the feedback or other information about their progress. The literature also revealed that even in secondary school education, learners between the age of thirteen and seventeen years of age failed to respond to their teachers' feedback. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the education officers to develop a module for English language teachers on what feedback in formative assessment in Malaysian primary school education should look like. This study also showed evidence of how Liz, Chen and Dennis conducted their teaching and assessment (e.g. when they provided hint, prompts, giving examples in conducting their assessment, memorizing prior to the assessment conducted for primary schools and for young learners). It could

be used as a guide for the Ministry of Education, curriculum reformers and curriculum developers in developing such a module or guide.

Education officials need to consider the extent to which SBA and examinations are aligned. The literature has discussed the challenges in aligning both of these assessments because of their competing roles (OECD, 2013; Christodoulou, 2016). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the ministry to align formative and summative assessment and utilize both of these assessment approaches as stated by William in Christodoulou (2016, p. 21) that Assessment for learning is not just about teachers being responsive; it is about pupils responding to information about their progress. Thus, to sustain SBA in the Malaysian primary school.

Education officials should also understand that for an initiative to be implemented effectively and for teachers to cope with the demands of this SBA, teachers need pedagogical skills, knowledge and a clear understanding of the concepts underlying the initiative as well as the ideas behind the change. In other words, English language teachers in Malaysia need the necessary support as well as an understanding of the required adjustments specifically what SBA means in practice and what teachers are required to do. Wedell (2009) also suggests that if the curriculum change involves significant cultural shifts, the policy makers must decide what the intended change requires teachers to do and then decide on the kind of support they need, who will provide these supports and the length of time for which the supports will be needed.

7.3.2 Implications for teacher educators and supporting English language teachers

The teachers in Malaysia may not be aware of their existing pedagogical beliefs, but this study provides evidence that their prior teaching–learning experiences have a major influence on the way they implement and interpret certain changes introduced to them. Therefore, it is important that training and development programs in teachers training institutes should consider the opportunity for pre-service and in-service teachers to reflect on their own classroom practices, allowing their existing pedagogical beliefs as well as their prior or existing teaching experiences to be uncovered and confronted. The contextual factors which influence what happens in the teachers' classrooms should also be examined. Officials need to understand that guidelines, guidebooks and one-off training are not enough to allow teachers to follow through with the demands of such change. Fullan (2001) had warned that readjusting one's beliefs is not easy, as it involves 'the core value held by individuals regarding the purpose of education' (p. 44), and suggested that to alter teachers' pedagogical beliefs, extensive support must be provided.

Teachers cannot be blamed for the limited uptake of the Malaysian SBA. The in-service teachers in this study showed strong support for SBA, showed a willingness to change and showed significant changes and a great sense of awareness with regard to assessment and the SBA. Additionally, the teachers in this study had implemented part of the recommended

activities as suggested in the SBA documents in spite of the major factors affecting their practices, as discussed in previous chapters. The limited uptake can be attributed to inadequate training.

Malaysian English language teachers need to know the concepts of formative assessment and the principles which underlie this type of assessment. They also need a clear understanding of its benefits to both the teachers and specifically to learners, and they need to understand the process of conducting formative assessment and that feedback is an essential element of its process. Thus, this study suggests that comprehensive support and training from the government, from the Ministry of Education, from education officials and teacher educators is necessary on this dimension of assessment (formative assessment as Black and William (1998) described it and other scholars, see, Section 2.2.1) and that formative assessment in-service training should take effect immediately if the Ministry of Education wants to sustain SBA in Malaysian primary school education. This immediate in-service training proposal suggests these following points:

- The meaning and differences of formative and summative assessment specifically the principles underlying formative assessment as discussed in many existing studies (as in Section 2.2.1). Literature on formative assessment had argued the importance of understanding its principle to avoid misconceptions with regards to this type of assessment.
- The training could also include the misconceptions of formative assessment and the challenges that it encounters elsewhere specifically in countries that had proposed such form of assessment in their education system (as discussed in Section 2.2.2). Literature

had also argued the success and failure of formative assessment is affected by many contextual factors including the difficulties in articulating what formative assessment is (as shown in this study).

- Existing studies (see, Section 2.4.3) including this study had presented evidences on the importance of identifying teachers' prior pedagogical beliefs with regards to assessment. It is also important during the proposed in-service training the teachers' prior or existing pedagogical beliefs with regards to assessment is identified and confronted. Thus, identifying the way formative assessment could be best implemented which is agreed on according to the needs of the Malaysian teaching and learning context. The training may also lead to other discoveries concerning teachers' pedagogical beliefs which this study might not had encountered.

7.4 Suggestions for further study

This study has provided insights into three English language teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual SBA practices. The study only focused on the teachers and what they do and why they do it, in terms of SBA. I suggest that for future research, the following could provide valuable insights with regards to SBA:

- This study used a qualitative methodology to uncover the reasons behind the teachers' practices, providing an in-depth discovery of what teachers do in terms of SBA being imposed on them. I suggest that this study can provide the basis for the design of a survey in which the practices and beliefs of a wider range of teachers can be studied. For example, a survey that focuses on the dimensions of teachers' pedagogical conceptions of effective feedback primarily focusing at primary school level or young learners; conceptions about assessment, their attitude towards educational reform (about assessment in particular) and their pedagogical beliefs about

assessment (mainly a focus on classroom assessment) could be useful for curriculum reformers in considering the best way to support the SBA policy or to develop it in new directions.

- This study also took the initiative to interview one Ministry of Education officer in the curriculum unit, which provided very useful information. I suggest that interviewing policy makers and getting their ideas on what lies behind the change or behind any future changes, for that matter, would be equally insightful. This is because when education officials (the policy makers and those running the policy for them) and the teachers understand reasons for the change and its importance. Such understanding enables both parties to work towards the direction and aims of the change.
- This study has highlighted that since the introduction of SBA, parents influence the way the teachers in the study implemented SBA. A focus on parents regarding how they feel about SBA, what they believe about assessment and what it means for their children to be assessed could provide an understanding of what type of assessment parents prefer and how their preferred assessment can be aligned with the SBA initiatives. Literature has emphasised about the importance of parental involvement in education reforms (Comer and Haynes, 1991; Epstein, 1995) and to consider parents as 'partnership' in education (Dewey, 1916 cited in Shumow, 1997, p. 205). This is because parents seem to reject reforms that they do not understand and advocate a return to old practices for this reason (Cassanova, 1996). Literature also indicates that parents seem to accept education reforms when they understand and are consulted about them (Shumow, 1998). Shumow (1997) argued that little research had been conducted about parental beliefs with regards to schooling and learning although they are considered important stakeholders. He further stated that to include parents participation in education decision-making their views about education (about assessment in the case of this study) should be considered.

- Finally, although this study represents only a small number of teachers, it outlines valuable directions of research on educational reform and the contextual factors influencing teachers' strong held pedagogical beliefs about SBA and its practices (see, Section 7.2). Possible study could be undertaken about teachers' pedagogical beliefs about assessment and reflection on their identity, role and responsibilities on assessment practices. This could be an important step in changing teachers' existing pedagogical beliefs about assessment. By reflecting on one's identity, roles and responsibilities could lead to teachers changing pedagogical beliefs and behaviour (Mihaela and Alina-Oana, 2015). Specifically could lead to a valuable discovery and ways that could change teachers' attitude toward existing pedagogical beliefs about teaching-assessment practices.

7.5 A personal reflection

I conclude with some brief comments regarding how this study has helped me in my personal academic development.

I learned to understand that research is not a straightforward process, even if one is familiar with the context under study. It is not just a process which involves compiling all relevant data and determining its implications for the intended audience, but it is also a process dealing with a large amount of data materials. It involves selecting the most appropriate quotations and focusing on related themes and making sense of them, reflecting on and finding the correct structure for discussion and matching the findings with relevant literature in order to get the ideas across meaningfully.

This study also helped develop my research skills and ideas in a way which might not have been possible without going through the process. I learned the conventions of academic writing and how to illustrate my ideas. I also learned what data is in qualitative research, how data is collected and generated, how data is interpreted and how to make sense of it. I believe that now I have the confidence needed to carry out studies using qualitative research methodology for English language and assessment in my home country, Malaysia.

In the introduction of this study, I mentioned that I was involved in the introduction and implementation of SBA for three years before undertaking my PhD at the University of Leeds. As a primary school teacher, I experienced the difficulties in implementing and understanding what SBA meant in classroom practice, because of the way SBA was introduced. Thus, I wanted to know how other teachers were experiencing it and coping with the implementation, specifically, how they do it and their reasons for implementing SBA in the way they do. Throughout the course of the study, reading literature on educational innovations, teachers' beliefs and assessment, I learned first-hand to understand what formative assessment is really about, how it is used and what outcome it can give to both the learner and the teacher when used appropriately with the right process. The study also made me sympathise with primary school teachers in general and specifically with the English language primary school teachers in Malaysia. It made me appreciate the difficulties and complexities which teachers face when they are required to implement educational reform. Educational

change also teaches that there is no fast track to overcome challenges but that change requires that all levels of the education system work together and commit to the process.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Suggested teaching and learning strategies and assessment activities

Years 1 & 2	Years 3, 4, 5 & 6	Assessment activities
Listening and Speaking Module		
<p>Use of pictures, posters, photos, stories, songs and many other resources comes in handy.</p> <p>Talk about a picture or story, and pupils listen attentively to words being used in different contexts.</p> <p>Work in pairs and progressively talking in a group to act and react to different kinds of audiences should also be developed.</p> <p>Pupils should be given the opportunity to use technologies, art and crafts such as puppets, masks or recorders to listen to and record stories, poems or any form of speaking, especially from their own efforts.</p> <p>Do action songs for movements, smell spices in a story, touch surfaces in a rhyme, see insects through a poster or taste foods while talking about experiences.</p> <p>Students can make funny sounds, shaping their mouths and looking at the mirror while forming and producing them.</p> <p>Recording students' voices is a helpful mechanism for self-evaluation and improvement.</p>	<p>Pupils will still be playing around with sounds through poems, tongue twisters and songs with particular emphasis on pronunciation, rhythm and intonation.</p> <p>At this stage, pupils will also be expected to do more talking with guidance from stimuli before they move into more clear, accurate, confident and independent speech on a variety of topics.</p> <p>Reading fables, folk tales, fairy tales and telling stories about children from different cultures and countries or events of daily experiences taps into their imagination.</p> <p>In Years 5 and 6, pupils are exposed to more forms and functions such as showing appreciation, expressing condolences, volunteering, encouraging and expressing opinions to help them deal with daily situations which they may encounter. With the input given, pupils should be able to participate in conversations and talk on various topics.</p>	<p>Assessment need not be in a formal situation all the time. Besides pupils' being assessed through activities in the classroom such as role play and group discussions, pupils should also be given the opportunity to participate in other possible listening and speaking situations. E.g. pupils can speak during the school assembly, put on a performance in front of an audience and watch a puppet show or listen to a storytelling session. Talking about these events and the contents afterwards can help teachers assess the pupils' listening and speaking skills.</p> <p>Checklists can be used to record students' progress as part of the assessment activities while they perform or speak during assembly (e.g. making announcements, reciting poems, singing in groups or telling stories).</p> <p>Use classroom observations to observe students' engagement in conversations with peers or activities (e.g. role play, drama).</p>
Reading Module		

<p>Using the strategies of phonics, teachers are expected to develop pupils' phonemic awareness (ability to hear, identify and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words).</p> <p>Students should apply the phonic skills they have acquired and mastered to increase the pace of their reading and, equally, to assist them to comprehend a text more effectively and efficiently.</p> <p>Teachers and schools should bear in mind the importance of following the sequence of the phonics programme consistently from start to finish to secure optimum progress in pupils' acquisition of phonic knowledge and skills, whereas mixing can slow their progress.</p> <p>The reading aloud strategy is also encouraged. The teacher reads a text aloud to pupils. Implementing this strategy allows teachers to model reading.</p> <p>Articulation and pronunciation of words by the teacher have to be as precise as possible in order for pupils to efficiently imitate and reproduce correctly.</p> <p>To carry out shared reading strategies in the classroom, the teacher and pupils read together, thus allowing pupils to actively participate and support one another in the process of reading. Teachers point to the text as they read slowly for word recognition and to 'build a sense of story'.</p>	<p>The use of dictionaries will be emphasised in order to expand and extend vocabulary.</p> <p>The use of the Internet and other electronic media is encouraged</p> <p>Encourage pupils to read by themselves or with partners, choose their own texts and employ strategies which they've learned through other reading activities.</p> <p>The use of metacognitive strategies helps pupils to 'think about their thinking' before, during and after they read.</p> <p>Ask questions which trigger and activate thinking about a particular subject in a text.</p> <p>Encourage pupils to make predictions and explore possibilities which may become apparent while reading the text.</p> <p>Stimulating pupils to think about and guess what they are about to read may be achieved through the use of riddles, visual stimuli such as the illustrations on the book cover or even the title of the story. E.g. During reading, instruct pupils to verify their predictions and check for inaccurate guesses. Pupils could also be asked to identify information which is new to them. E.g. After reading, comprehension of the text may be obtained through questions answered orally or in written form or through nonlinear forms such as mind maps, tables, charts, illustrations or pictures.</p>	<p>Years 1 & 2</p> <p>Assessing phonemic awareness could be done through activities which include rhyme, alliteration, segmentation and other phonemic awareness tasks.</p> <p>Years 3, 4, 5 & 6</p> <p>Use questions and activities which incorporate graphic and/or semantic organisers, story maps or summarisation to assess students' ability to read and comprehend texts.</p>
<p>Writing Module</p>		
<p>At the pre-writing level, encourage activities which develop visual skills, enhance gross and fine motor skills, develop hand-eye coordination and strengthen the muscles of the hand, e.g. painting, drawing, cutting and sticking, using threading boards, hammering, following patterns with their</p>	<p>It is important to use a structured approach by working on the language needed and by providing examples, so students will have a model of a finished product. Teachers need to teach at a level designed to extend pupils' learning by building upon what they already know and by providing appropriate challenging tasks to lead pupils along a line of progression.</p>	<p>As writing is a productive skill, it can be assessed through tests, exams and class exercises. In assessing writing in primary schools, teachers may focus on the following issues:</p> <p>Organisation (sentences/paragraph order)</p> <p>Grammar (correct use of nouns,</p>

<p>fingers, creating patterns in sand or shaping materials such as strips of modelling clay.</p> <p>At the letter-writing level, pupils learn that each letter has a shape and a name and makes sounds. From this, they will be taught to identify the initial sounds in words such as their names and will learn how to replicate sounds by writing letters.</p> <p>At the word level, pupils need to practise the skills of writing and of spelling words to consolidate an awareness of the structure and make-up of English words. Word games and activities such as pictograms will have the added benefit of increasing vocabulary.</p>	<p>ICT makes possible a number of beneficial approaches to the teaching of writing (e.g. encourage the pupils to write drafts, which can then be revised, shared with other readers, discussed and edited before reaching their final versions). The use of the word processor reinforces this drafting process. Hence, desktop publishing should be encouraged to provide the output of children's work by mixing text and pictures.</p>	<p>pronouns, verbs)</p> <p>Syntax (writing clear and coherent sentences)</p> <p>Punctuation</p> <p>Capitalisation</p> <p>Spelling</p> <p>Vocabulary (using correct word in given situation)</p> <p>Elements of written projects or activities (e.g. tests, exams, class exercise, journals, diaries, poems, writing script, dialogues and song lyrics).</p> <p>Use creative projects to assess students' progress (i.e. giving instructions so the students can produce creative work such as making masks, puppets etc.).</p>
<p>Language Arts Module</p>		
<p>Pupils will enjoy learning to play with language where rhymes and songs are constantly utilised, using the teacher as the model for pupils.</p> <p>Infuse pupils with the love of reading books, starting with analysing book covers and pictures in Year 1 and gradually moving to the story content in Year 2.</p> <p>Pupils are to produce simple creative works based on nursery rhymes, action songs jazz chants and the fairy tales learned with teachers' guidance.</p>	<p>The Contemporary Children's Literature component is taught during the Language Arts lessons to expose pupils to different literary genres such as short stories, poems and graphic novels.</p> <p>Teachers are to exploit texts in these genres to create fun-filled and meaningful activities in language learning, so pupils enjoy the learning experience and gain exposure to the aesthetic use of language.</p> <p>Poems, stories and plays help pupils respond to texts through discussions, writing, dramatisation and art media in order to make connections to what they read and to organise their thinking.</p> <p>Familiar texts such as fables, fairy tales and local folklore are used as affective stimulation with the sole purpose of stimulating pupils' minds and helping them express their feelings towards different stories and situations.</p> <p>Language Arts creates ample opportunities for pupils to speak in English in a very relaxed atmosphere. Due to the fun elements of language arts, it is hoped pupils' presentations or dialogues spoken in role play will help them increase their confidence in using the English language.</p>	<p>Assessment and evaluation in the Language Arts Module should foster lifelong learning and critical thinking by providing pupils with constructive feedback and by encouraging them to reflect upon their own learning.</p> <p>Assessment should be broad and flexible enough to include and accept all activities conducted in school (i.e. drama, choral speaking, public speaking, speech day, school bulletin). Assessment should also provide pupils with opportunities to self-assess using known criteria and to have input into the evaluation process. Teachers should utilise a variety of assessment techniques to monitor their pupils' language growth and development. Some of the key techniques are:</p> <p>Observations</p> <p>Checklists</p> <p>Anecdotal records</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Retelling and journals</p> <p>Inventories and running records</p>

		Performance tasks and demonstrations Folders and portfolios
Grammar Module		
In Years 1 and 2, pupils' L1 will take care of their basic knowledge of grammar. The schemata formed in the first language will prepare pupils to learn grammar in the second language from Year 3.	<p>Communicative drills are encouraged for pupils to connect form, meaning and use. In communicative drills, pupils respond to the grammar point under consideration but provide their own content; e.g. to practice questions and answers in the past tense, teacher and pupils can ask and answer questions about activities concluded the previous day.</p> <p>Teachers should have knowledge of managing games, technologies and available resources in the classroom. E.g. Repetition of words, phrases and sentences can be a useful strategy to help pupils remember. Drilling can be made fun by incorporating repetition of sentence patterns, for example, in nursery rhymes.</p> <p>A more conventional approach such as the substitution table for teaching sentence patterns can be reinforced after a grammar game.</p> <p>The teacher can also use word cards to teach grammar. Inclusion of punctuation marks can also be made here.</p> <p>Newspapers and magazines can also be used to encourage pupils to read and familiarise themselves with spelling and sentence structures (e.g. the teacher can carry out many group work activities by working with headlines, sentence structures and pictures in the newspapers). Gap-filling and sentence completion exercises can also be incorporated when working with these resources.</p> <p>Use songs, treasure hunts and grammar games to teach grammar. Information communication & technology elements such as teaching and learning courseware or the E-dictionary can be incorporated into a grammar lesson.</p>	<p>The on-going process of assessing of all classwork and homework should be continued. The main purpose of this is to provide immediate feedback to the pupils in guiding, motivating, correcting and refocusing their efforts. In formal exams, grammar items could be tested in close passages, gap-filling items and short essays.</p>

Appendix B: Samples of content, learning standard and performance standard for Year Four (Listening & Speaking)

CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARD	PERFORMANCE STANDARD	
		PERFORMANCE LEVEL	DESCRIPTOR
1.2 By the end of the 6 year primary schooling, pupils will be able to listen and respond appropriately in formal and informal situations for a variety of purposes.	1.2.1 Able to participate in daily conversations: (a) extend an invitation (b) accept an invitation (c) decline an invitation (d) express sympathy 1.2.4 Able to participate in guided conversations with peers	1	Can participate in daily and guided conversations with peers with a very limited level of fluency and appropriateness
		2	Can participate in daily and guided conversations with peers with a limited level of fluency and appropriateness
		3	Can participate in daily and guided conversations with peers with a satisfactory level of fluency and appropriateness
		4	Can participate in daily and guided conversations with peers with a good level of fluency and appropriateness
		5	Can participate in daily and guided conversations with peers with a very good level of fluency and appropriateness
		6	Can participate in daily and guided conversations with peers with an excellent level of fluency and appropriateness
	1.2.2 Able to listen to, follow and give instructions	1	Can listen to, follow and give instructions and directions around the neighbourhood with very limited ability
	1.2.3	2	Can listen to, follow and give instructions and directions around the neighbourhood with

Appendix C: Performance level specification for Year 4

PERFORMANCE STANDARD	
Performance level	Descriptors
1	<p>Know basic skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say aloud rhymes or sing songs with guidance. • Identify and distinguish the letters of the alphabet. • Recognize and articulate initial, medial and the final sounds in single syllable words. • Blend phonemes into recognizable words and read them aloud. • Segment words into phonemes to spell. • Demonstrate fine motor control of hands and fingers.
2	<p>Know and understand words, phrases and sentences heard, spoken, read and written:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in daily conversation. • Read and recognize words and apply word attack skills by matching words with graphics. • Read and recognize words and apply word attack skills by matching words with spoken words. • Copy and write in neat legible print.
3	<p>Know, understand and apply knowledge obtained through listening, speaking, reading and writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in formal conversation. • Listen to and follow simple instructions and directions • Read and understand phrases in linear and non-linear texts. • Read and understand sentences in linear and non-linear texts with guidance. • Apply basic dictionary skills using picture dictionaries • Spell common sight words and seen words.
4	<p>Apply knowledge obtained through listening, speaking, reading and writing in various situations using good manners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to and demonstrate understanding of oral texts. • Match realia to simple sentences read. • Follow instructions from simple linear and non-linear texts. • Punctuate correctly.
5	<p>Demonstrate well the ability to apply knowledge of listening, speaking, reading and writing for various purposes using admirable manners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about a picture with guidance. • Read simple fiction and non-fiction texts for information. • Write simple sentences with guidance. • Complete forms with guidance. • Make a list.
6	<p>Appreciating literary works by performing and presenting ideas using exemplary manners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about a short story with guidance. • Recite rhymes with correct stress, rhythm and intonation. • Choose and read simple fiction and non-fiction texts for personal enjoyment. • Create simple non-linear texts using a variety of media with guidance.

Appendix D: Offline recording and storing of pupils' achievements for SBA

a. Recording form

Home Layout Tables Charts SmartArt Formulas Data Review

AD18

MODUL PEREKODAN PERKEMBANGAN PEMBELAJARAN MURID

TAHUN PERSEKOLAHAN: _____
 NAMA SEKOLAH: _____
 KELAS: _____
 MATA PELAJARAN: BAHASA INGGERIS TAHUN 1
 NAMA GURU MATA PELAJARAN: _____

Arahan:
 1. Sila lengkapkan maklumat No Mykid/Surat Beranak/Dokumen dan Nama Murid.
 2. Sila pilih jantina murid.
 3. Sila taip atau pilih "X" pada kotak Band penguasaan murid.

BIL	NO. MYKID/ SURAT BERANAK/ DOKUMEN	NAMA MURID	JANTINA	KEMAHIRAN																	
				Lisan						Baca						Tulis					
				BAND						BAND						BAND					
1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6				
1	1	A		X	X	X						X	X				X				
2	2	B		X	X	X						X	X				X	X			
3	3	C																			
4	4	D																			
5	5	E																			
6	6	F																			
7	7	G																			
8	8	H																			
9	9	I																			
10	10	J																			
11	11	K																			

BORANG PEREKODAN BORANG PRESTASI PRESTASI UJIAN PENGAL PELAPORAN MURID

b. Achievement form

Home Layout Tables Charts SmartArt Formulas Data Review

G13

TAHUN PERSEKOLAHAN: 0
 NAMA SEKOLAH: 0
 KELAS: 0
 MATA PELAJARAN: BAHASA INGGERIS TAHUN 1
 NAMA GURU MATA PELAJARAN: 0

*** Murid menguasai Band Tertinggi**

BIL	NO. MYKID/ SURAT BERANAK/ DOKUMEN	NAMA MURID	JANTINA	KEMAHIRAN		
				1	2	3
1	1	A		1	2	1
2	2	B		3	2	2
3	3	C				
4	4	D				
5	5	E				
6	6	F				
7	7	G				
8	8	H				
9	9	I				

BORANG PEREKODAN BORANG PRESTASI PRESTASI UJIAN PENGAL PELAPORAN MURID

Page Layout View Ready Sum = 2

c. Semester achievement

Home Layout Tables Charts SmartArt Formulas Data Review

Edit Font Alignment Number

Calibri (Body) 12

General

Conditional Formatting

G13

TAHUN PERSEKOLAHAN 0

NAMA SEKOLAH 0

KELAS 0

MATA PELAJARAN BAHASA INGGERIS TAHUN 1

NAMA GURU MATA PELAJARAN : 0

BIL	NO. MYKID/ SURAT BERANAK/ DOKUMEN	NAMA MURID	JANTINA	GREDEPENCAPAIAN UJIAN PENGKAL
1	1	A		c
2	2	B		c
3	3	C		
4	4	D		
5	5	E		
6	6	F		
7	7	G		
8	8	H		
9	9	I		
10	10	J		

BORANG PEREKODAN BORANG PRESTASI PRESTASI UJIAN PENGKAL PELAPORAN MURID

Page Layout View Ready Sum=0

d. Semester/ Yearly individual score

Home Layout Tables Charts SmartArt Formulas Data Review

Edit Font Alignment Number

Tahoma 14

General

Conditional Formatting

B3

PELAPORAN PENTAKSIRAN SEKOLAH

0

PELAPORAN PENTAKSIRAN SEKOLAH

MATA PELAJARAN BAHASA INGGERIS TAHUN 1

TAHUN

Nama Murid : A

No MyKid/ Surat Beranak/ Dokumen : 1

Tahun :

GREDEPENCAPAIAN UJIAN PENGKAL	PENYATAAN DESKRIPTOR PERKEMBANGAN PEMBELAJARAN MURID		
	KEMAHIRAN	BAND	PENYATAAN DESKRIPTOR
C	Lisan	3	Participate in conversation and answer questions correctly pertaining to personal details, school and family. Listen to and follow simple instructions and directions accurately.
	Baca	2	Read and recognize words by matching words with graphics and spoken words appropriately
	Tulis	1	Demonstrate fine motor control of hands and fingers by forming letters and shapes correctly.

*Murid menguasai Band Tertinggi

BORANG PEREKODAN BORANG PRESTASI PRESTASI UJIAN PENGKAL PELAPORAN MURID

Normal View Ready Sum=0

Appendix E: Participants' interview guide

Pre-study interview

What are the teachers' understanding, knowledge and views of SBA?

A. Teachers' background and experience

1. Can you share your educational background?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. Can you share your English language teaching experiences? How about your English learning experiences - can you share a little bit about those, too?
4. Can you share some of your experiences about exams/tests that you have taken?

B. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of SBA

1. As an English language teacher of many years, why do you think SBA is being introduced in primary schools? Can you share your feelings about this change?
2. Can you share what SBA means to you? How do you understand it?
3. Can you share what you are asked to do for SBA and how you do it?

C. Teachers' views about SBA in teaching and learning

1. Can you share your views on the benefits of SBA for learners, teachers and the nation in general?
2. Can you share your own feelings about SBA?
3. Since it is compulsory to incorporate SBA into your lessons, how much has SBA changed/influenced your teaching?
4. How about the learners? What do you think has changed with regard to their motivations for learning and your teaching and learning relationship with them?

D. Teachers' implementation of SBA

1. Can you share your classroom lesson? Can you share any of the activities that you do for
 - listening and speaking
 - reading
 - writing
 - language arts
2. So far, have you incorporated SBA into your lessons? Can you describe how many times have you incorporate SBA into your lessons?
3. Can you describe the assessment instruments/materials that you use for SBA? What do you usually do with the materials once corrections have been made?
4. The SBA states that students should be given opportunities for self-assessment and teachers should give input/feedback of their progress.
 - Can you describe if it is easy for you conduct these activities?
5. The SBA also encourages teachers to continue giving homework and classroom exercises.
 - Can you give your views on homework?
 - What is your view on classroom exercises?
6. How much do you think your teaching reflects the reform effort?

Appendix F: Sample of observation schedule with Liz

Appendix E: Classroom observation guide

Participant: <u>Ms. J12</u>	Date: <u>2/07/2015</u>
Observation no: <u>1/2/3/4</u>	Observation week: <u>1/2</u>
Topic: <u>Unit 8: My Mum.</u>	Time of observation: <u>10³⁰ - 11³⁰</u>
Lesson Module (✓): <u>Learning standard 3.1.1(c)(d)(e), 3.1.2(f)</u>	CLAS: <u>1 (J)</u>
Listening & Speaking () Reading () Writing (✓) Language Arts () Grammar ()	

Focus area	Activities	✓	Notes
A) Lesson structure - 23 remedial students - 4 mainstream students - she taught the same with the whole class but gave them different w/sheets.	a. At beginning of the lesson	✓	- Revising the words with the letter 'm'. - identifying, spelling the words.
	b. In the middle of the lesson	✓	- Distributing worksheets - Matching picture to sentences - Reading sentences in group - Walks around to see if they are correct
	c. At the end of the lesson	✓	- J. collects worksheets - Revise vocabularies learnt.
B) Use of instructional materials - picture cards - worksheets - whiteboard	a. Checking for understanding	✓	- Call individual names to spell, read & identify.
	b. Feedback	✓	- when ask she was actually monitoring them on how they were writing correctly.
	c. Checking learning progress	✓	- walks around the classroom guiding, facilitating - walks around to see ppis writing 'g' (lowercase) correctly.
	d. Assessment	✓	- writing simple sentences
	e. Others		
C) Classroom activities - Since it was a lesson which student have learnt all the vocabularies, the students were able to identify most/all the five picture w the correct spelling.	a. T interaction		- students are not afraid of asking the teacher for help - we can see by their movements in the classroom.
	b. T & S interaction		- They were moving freely towards teachers table, to their friends with their friends.
	c. S & S interaction		- Students depends on the teacher to provide them with assistance.
	d. T & S role		- T is more like a motherly character.
	e. Construct T & L		- Students are ready to answer

The syllabus 3.1.1 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling ppl will be able to form letters and words in neat legible print including cursive writing; answer sound frustrating when tea does not call their names

need to look on the assessment document 111 by: 3.1.1 Able to demonstrate fine motor control of hands and fingers

3.1.2 Able to copy and write in neat legible print: c/ using correct posture and pen hold grip. d/ scribbling in clockwise movement e/ scribbling in anti-clockwise movement f/ simple sentences.

Appendix G: Sample of field notes taken during observation with Liz

Date: 2/07/15 (Liz/FN (01)/07-15)

Class: Year 1(J)

Time: 10.20-11.20a.m.

I arrived at Liz's Year One English classroom at the same time as her. In fact we walked together to the class from the teachers room. She came to pick me up from my table on her way to the class. Liz warns me about the class I will be going in. The entire walk to the class Liz kept went on talking about the pupils' behavior. She had told me about this when I came in to the class during my preliminary classroom observations. She told me that this class is much more worst.

O.C: As a schoolteacher myself I am used to hear these kinds of worry from teachers telling the observant the situation or the condition of the class prior to being observed and what are to be expected.

As we were about to enter the classroom a girl came running and approaching to Liz telling her that two boys are fighting in the class. Liz a very soft-spoken teacher walked calmly to the two the boys and breaks the fight. I managed to capture a bit of the commotion. These boys were actually wrestling their heart out and were already down on the floor. The rest of the pupils were surrounding and watching them. It took Liz about 10 minutes of her lesson to manage the quarrel between these two boys. She instructed them to go back to their sit. As Liz was busy settling the two boys and the rest of the class in order for her to begin her lesson, I made a place for myself at the back of the classroom. The two boys were actually sitting a row from each other. The other seems not be quite satisfied with the teacher breaking up the fight. He turned to his opponent and started hitting him again as hard as he could. I just looked at Liz and she came walking to deal with them again but it didn't ended easily. So Liz made the decision to put the other boy to another seat. Even so, the boy, who was moved couldn't stop looking at his opponent in rage.

O.C: I was a bit surprised at the fight and the boy showing his unstoppable anger at his opponent. The other was a bit relaxed. When Liz mentioned of their behavior I was not expecting this kind of behavior in a Year One classroom.

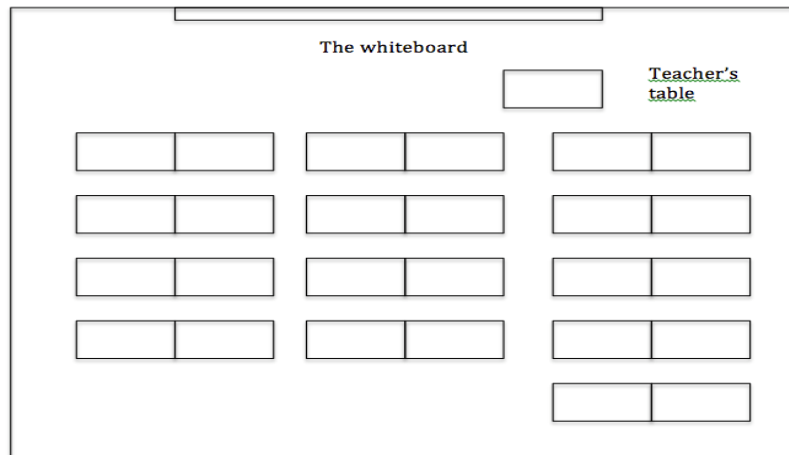
After about 15minutes of time wasted for the two boys, Liz began her lesson. Liz started her lesson by recalling the vocabularies that the pupils had been learning previously.

O.C: A few pupils were looking at the back to my direction. A few those closer to me would be calling me "teacher" and asking without fear what I was doing there. "Teacher buat apa sini?" (translation- Teacher, what are you doing here?). The entire lesson few of the students would stare at the back and come to see what I was writing. I sent them back to their seats and tell them to look at Liz and what she was teaching. I felt like I am one of

Date: 14/07/15 (Liz/FN(02)/07-15)

Class: Year 1(I)

Time: 08.50-0.950 a.m.



The sitting arrangements in all of the class in this school are facing the board. And students are to sit in pairs and sometimes in threes. After the matching activity was completed, Liz began to distribute the worksheet in the classroom. Once everyone has the task, Liz asked the students to write their names. Then she spends the whole activity going from table to table to see how her students were doing. As usual Liz distributed two different kinds of worksheets. One is for good students (sequencing the sentences according to the story heard earlier) and the second one is just matching the sentences to the pictures. The teacher continues to walk from student to student. Then she stops at one table in front at the second row. Liz was on her knees with the students work. She spent about 20 minutes on her heels surrounded by most of the students in the class.

O.C: I wonder what were actually going on there. I need to ask Liz this and what she thinks of the students surrounding her like that. What was she instructing the students to do after handing it back to them.

Just like the other class I see the students walking around the whole lesson asking help from their friends or walking towards the teacher. Some were also playing with each other. A student was also wiping the board from the earlier activity. One student kept on knocking his table. I saw a student even helping her friend to write her name. At this moment a student from another class came in asking for a student from Liz class. The class became noisier.

O.C: I also wonder what Liz thinks of these activities in her classroom.

Liz then started using her class routine by counting numbers and ordering them to sit down and calming the class. Once she calms the class, Liz wiped the board.

Appendix H: Sample of my personal note in Liz's school

23/06/2015 (PN/liz/06-15)

First Day in school (Liz)

- I arrived at school around 7.05 am, school was about to begin at 7.10am. This was the beginning of my second phase of data collection. This week was all about preliminary observation. When I entered the school, my first intention was to see the head of school who gave me access to do my fieldwork in the school. Since I have come to the school before during the school break to conduct my preliminary interviews I had no problem of finding my way to the administration office. The only problem was I did not have any idea who he is but I did get some information that the head of school arrives early to school every day. I may not find the problem of seeing him this early morning as no one will be visiting head school at this time except in some cases like mine.
- As I entered the administration office a man from his office greeted me. Since I know the head of school arrive early to the school, I get the sense that he is the person I am looking for. I could not see the label on his door since it was wide opened. He welcomed me to sit in his office and I started introducing myself and showed my research pass. Since he was expecting me, he gave a good smile. The head of school asked some questions on what I was doing, so, I started explaining. He had no problem of me with my fieldwork and gave me the permission to do what I should be doing. He then offered me a space in the administrative office but I would be more happier if he could place me in the teacher's room because I wanted to be with the teachers and communicate with them. They know that my existence was as a researcher but I also wanted to be part of the community. Before I went to my sitting place, I told the head of school that I would like to help with any of the school activities and teaching as well. He was happy with these words. I know most head was happy to hear this when sometimes they are short with teaching staff, sent for courses or due other circumstances. I think it was a good thing I mentioned this.
- I was placed with two teachers' trainees. What I actually wanted was to be with the other teachers. It is a space right after the entrance. Another small door leading to rest of the teacher's office. The teachers had a small seating place divided by small cubicles. I had always wanted a place like this when I was teaching but then I see that as I know then an open area was much better. Where everyone see each other and can talk with each other anytime they want without being separated by any walls.

Appendix I: Sample summary from Liz's classroom observations

Focus/ The intended SBA	Liz's practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SBA is carried out continuously in school by teachers during the teaching and learning process. - It is to be conducted by the pupils own subject teacher. - It focuses on both formative and summative assessments. - It does not compare pupils' achievements with his/her peers instead it reports and compare each pupils growth and development against their performance standard (see Appendix B and C). - It gives the teachers the freedom to choose or adapt the kind of formative and summative assessment activities according to their school context and environment. - The assessments conducted (either formative or summative) should allow the teachers to continuously monitor the pupils' growth and provide constructive feedback to help improve pupils' learning abilities based on the performance standards they had achieved. 	<p>The teacher conducts the lesson herself If students cannot complete the task/ assessment on that day, the lesson will be repeated and the teacher will continue with the task and lesson the next day or continuously when necessary.</p> <p>Revising the topic/ lesson taught previously is important until the students are able to develop the understanding or memorize the lesson.</p> <p>The students understanding of the topic/ lesson is important. Only then they could be assessed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in the listening and speaking modules or activities (discussed in section 1.2), teachers may use checklists to record their students' progress as part of the assessment activities while they perform or speak during assembly (e.g., making announcements, reciting poems, singing in groups or telling stories). In the classroom, teachers may use classroom observations to observe their students' engagement in conversations with their peers or activities (e.g., role-play, drama). 	<p>Group work is difficult to manage Using games in the lesson 95% the teacher uses the English language as a medium of instruction Incorporate some of the Malay language to help with students understanding of the vocabularies taught.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the KSSR reading module, teachers may use questions and activities that incorporate graphic and/or semantic organisers, story maps or summarisation to assess their students' ability to read and comprehend texts. 	<p>Reading the words/phrases after the teacher Repeating after the teacher were mostly when reading. Then students will asked to read individually Using pictures and word/sentence cards to help pupils with their understanding of new words</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the writing component of the KSSR curriculum, teachers may incorporate elements of written projects or activities (e.g., tests, exams, class exercises, journals, diaries, poems, writing scripts, dialogues and song lyrics). Additionally, teachers may also use creative projects to assess students' progress (i.e., giving simple instructions so that students can produce creative work such as making masks, puppets, etc.). 	<p>The focus of assessment is mostly on the writing component Using worksheet is the way to measure the students understanding of the particular topic The students can only be assessed when they do the task individually</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students should have opportunities for self-assessment and receive input on their progresses. For example, when completing homework, class exercises or creative work teachers should give students the opportunity to evaluate how well they have done, according to certain performance standards (see Appendix B). Teachers are encouraged to give students feedback on their work if they are meeting the expected standard. Teachers also need to explain or discuss the best way to improve performance to the students' desired levels. 	<p>Student attention is important in the classroom to make them understand the topic being taught The teacher movement going to one student to the other is important so she could make immediate correction. Making immediate corrections on the students task if they had made the mistakes</p>

Appendix J: Liz's lesson plan from the class observation

PERKARA	TARIKH 2nd July 2015	HARI Thursday
Subject	English	Time: 10 40 - 11 20
Class	1 Sauhari	
Focus	Writing	
Learning standard	3.1.1 (c), (d), (e), 3.1.2 (f)	
Objectives	By the end of the lesson, pupils should be able to	
	Remedial (23 pupils)	
	match and write sentences to pictures at least 4 out of 5 sentences.	
	Mainstream (4 pupils)	
	Rearrange words to form correct sentences at least 4 out of 5 sentences.	
Activities	1. Review the words start with the letter /m/ 2. Read sentences. 3. Read and match sentences to picture. 4. Writing activity: Remedial: Match sentences to picture Mainstream: Rearrange words to form correct sentences based on picture.	
Phonemic words	mat, moon, mug, mum, mouse.	
ksse words	this, is, a, the	
Materials	picture cards, worksheets	
Reflection	Remedial: I found most of them can match sentences with picture. I also detected, pupils cannot write lowercase 'g' correctly. Teacher needs to focus on writing lowercase letters. Mainstream: They can do the task correctly. Teacher should prepare more back up activities for	
	Disemak oleh:	
	Tarikh:	

Appendix K: Sample of Liz's recording at the back page of lesson plan book

REKOD PRESTASI MATA PELAJARAN					
MATA PELAJARAN: English			TAHUN/ TINGKATAN 1 Jauhari		
	NAMA	B2DB2		B2DT4	
		A	NA	A	NA
1	LINUS (remedial)				
2	1. Adrian Pariedie	✓		✓	
3	2. Adrin Matius		X		X
4	3. Azli Bahari	✓		✓	
5	4. Bintang Dania	✓		✓	
6	5. Chalvester Clarence	✓		✓	
7	6. Cherry Chincos	✓		✓	
8	7. Danny Effendy		X		X
9	8. Fatin Syafiqah	✓			X
10	9. Halun.	✓		✓	
11	10. Kasumi Edreen	✓		✓	
12	11. Mohammad Firdaus	✓		✓	
13	12. Mohammad Hilmi	✓			X
14	13. Mohd. Shukri		X		X
15	14. Mohd. Farid	✓		✓	
16	15. Mohd. Zulfikar	✓		✓	
17	16. Mohd. Aidi	✓		✓	
18	17. Mohd. Illyas	Absent			
19	18. Nuraznail Balqis	✓		✓	
20	19. Secvistar Fabian	✓		✓	
21	20. Sheryleyana	✓		✓	
22	21. Siti Nurshahidah	✓		✓	
23	22. Siti Salvina	✓		✓	
24	23. Stivpen chai	✓		✓	
25					
26		B3DB3		B3DB4	
27	Mainstream	A	NA	A	NA
28	24. Nurul Balqis	✓		✓	
29	25. Nurayatiqah	✓		✓	
30	26. Gerard	✓			X
31	27. Mohd. Fazlie	✓		✓	
32					
33					
34					
35					
36	* A = Achieved (✓)				
37	- NA = Not Achieved (x)				
38					
39					
40					
41					
42					
43					
44					

Appendix L: Sample of interview transcript translated to English

a. Original transcript

Liz: Pada pendapat saya, kenapa uhm..SBA ni, school-based assessment diperkenalkan di sekolah, saya sebab kan sebelum ini saya rasa kita based on exam-oriented ba kan. Untuk lulus exam saja. Jadi macam tu tekanan ba kan untuk lulus exam saja. Jadi mungkin yang begitu tu kan macam tidak berkesanlah pada saya. Hanya untuk dia belajar untuk lulus exam sahaja. Jadi bila diperkenalkan SBA, saya nampak dan saya sudah pun jalankan SBA ni. Dia mahu tengok potensi murid itu, SBA mahu tengok potensi murid itu ba. Setiap hari kita mahu tengok potensi murid itu samada dia kuasai kemahiran yang dia belajar hari ini. Boleh dapatkah, dia boleh kuasaikah ataupun tidak dalam itu la SBA. Dia mahu tengok potensi murid itu menguasai atau dia tidak menguasai. Itu yang saya tahu lah perbezaan yang dulu dan yang sekarang ni.

b. My translation

Liz: to me the reason SBA school-based assessment was introduced in in school because before this we were based on exam-oriented, right? Just to pass examination. So maybe those ways are not effective to me they learn only to pass examination. So when SBA was introduced and I have done SBA it wants to look at the potential of the students. SBA wants to look at the students' potential, right. Each day we look at their their potential if they have acquired the skills learnt on that day. If they could acquire or not that SBA. It wants to see if the student can or not achieve the required skills. That's what I know the differences between previous and now.

c. My friend's translation

In my opinion, why uhm...actually, SBA, school-based assessment was introduced in school because all this while we were exam-oriented right? To pass exam only. So, the pressure was to pass in the exam. So, maybe, that is not effective for me. Pupils learn to pass the exams only. So, when SBA was introduced, I saw/realised that I had already implemented SBA. It wants to measure the pupil's potential, SBA wants to measure pupils potential. Everyday, we wanted to see/identify either the pupil has achieved/mastered the skills taught in the lesson. Can the pupils master the target skills or not. It wants to identify the pupils mastery of the skills or not. That's what I know/understand based on the changes/differences from the previous and the recent one.

Appendix M: Interview guide with Ministry of Education official

1. Could you share with me, what is your post and unit in the Ministry of Education?
2. Could you share with me, what was the idea behind the introduction of SBA in the Malaysian primary school English language curriculum?
3. How important do you think that SBA should be implemented?
4. Do you think the teachers are implementing SBA in their respective school?
 - How closely do you think that the teachers' implementation of the Malaysian SBA matches with the recommended SBA?
5. What do you think are the challenges in the implementation of SBA in the Malaysian primary school?

Appendix N: Participant information sheet and consent form

Participant information sheet

PROJECT TITLE

From Policy to Practice: The Effect of Teachers' Educational Beliefs and Values on Their Interpretation of School-Based Assessment Reform in Primary Schools in Malaysia.

INVITATION

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate or not on the project it is important that you understand the reason why the research is being done and what will it involved. Please take the time to read the information carefully. Please feel free to contact me Stephania Albert Jonglai (edsaj@leeds.ac.uk).

THE RESEARCHER

Stephania Albert Jonglai, PhD candidate School of Education University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

The aim of this qualitative study is to explore teachers' interpretations of the Malaysian SBA in primary schools. This primary focus will be on in-service English language teachers teaching in primary schools. I aim to explore:

- Teachers' understanding, knowledge and views concerning Malaysian primary school SBA
- The influence of SBA has had on teachers' classroom practices
- The educational beliefs effecting teachers' conceptually and practically, of SBA policy

RESEARCH START AND END

The study is conducted in four phases:

Phase	Time	Activities
1	June 2015	Interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First week: School A & B• Second week: School C & D• Third week: School E Fourth week: Preliminary Classroom Observations in School 1
2	July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First week: First classroom observations + post classroom observations interviews• Second week: Second observations + post-classroom observation interviews• Third week: Final classroom observations + post-classroom observations interviews Fourth week: Preliminary classroom observations in School 2
3	August 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First week: First classroom observations + post classroom observations interviews• Second week: Second observations + post-classroom observation interviews• Third week: Final classroom observations + post-classroom observations interviews
4	September-November 2015	Final telephone/email interview/smartphone messaging application

What will it involved:

- **Discussions:** There will be a pre-study interview conducted in the first, second and third week of the visit and three rounds of post classroom observation interview on the fifth day on each week. You will also be asked to take part in a telephone/email interview/smartphone messaging application that will be conducted from September-November 2015.
- **Classroom observation:** Two schools will be selected to take part in a classroom observation for three weeks followed by a post

classroom observation interview on the fifth day of each week. The classroom observation will be audio recorded and video recorded at the final week of classroom observations.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study before classroom observation takes place. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn/destroyed if you decide to withdraw from the project. You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study's outcome). If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

BENEFITS AND RISKS

There are no known risks for you in this study. By participating in this study you will have the opportunity to share your experiences, knowledge, challenges encountered. Perhaps will identify common support needed for in-service teachers when change is being introduced at the school level in Malaysia. This information will be shared with you in this project once I have gathered all of the information.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data I collect will not contain any personal information about you. The information you provided will be strictly kept confidential. Only the researcher, Professor Mark Pike and Dr Martin Lamb will have access to the information you provided. The data will be used as part of my PhD thesis for the University of Leeds. It will be used for presentation at conferences and seminars

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to take part in this study please contact: Stephania Albert Jonglai (edsaj@leeds.ac.uk)

Participant consent form



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

	<i>Please initial box</i>
1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw before classroom observations takes place without being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.	
3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential (only if true). I give permission to the researcher to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.	
4. I agree to be audio-recorded during interview and video recorded for classroom observation.	
5. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in University of Leeds PhD thesis, conferences, for seminar purposes.	
6. I agree to take part in the above research project and to contact Stephania Albert Jonglai (edsaj@leeds.ac.uk) to any changes on my contact.	

* To be signed and dated in the presence of participant.

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Researcher	Stephania Albert Jonglai
Researcher's signature	
Date*	

Parent Consent Form

Dear Parent/Caretaker,

Your child's English subject teacher _____ (name of the English teacher) had agreed to participate in a research project entitled. "From Policy to Practice: The Effect of Teachers' Educational Beliefs and Values on Their Interpretation of School-Based Assessment Reform in Primary Schools in Malaysia".

I will be observing and video recording your child's classroom during the English language lesson about a week between June-August 2015. The focus of the video will be on the English teacher classroom practices about one hour for each session. The video recording will be used by me for my study and my thesis and will not be referred to any individual pupils.

Please complete and return the Permission Form to document your permission for these activities.

Yours Sincerely,
Stephania Albert Jonglai
PhD Candidate
University of Leeds
United Kingdom

----- (please return this permission form) -----

PERMISSION FORM

I am the parent/caretaker of _____ (child's name)
in _____ (class details). I have read your letter regarding
your project.

☒ *the appropriate box*

☐

***I GIVE PERMISSION** for my child to be video recorded during your observation in my child's classroom and I understand my child's name will not appear in any material related to the recording.

☐

***I DO NOT GIVE PERMISSION** for my child to be video recorded during your observation. She/he will be seated outside the recording activities

Appendix O: AERA Ethics approval

Performance, Governance and Operations
Research & Innovation Service
Charles Thackrah Building
101 Clarendon Road
Leeds LS2 9LJ Tel: 0113 343 4873
Email: ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Stephania Albert Jonglai
School of Education
University of Leeds
Leeds, LS2 9JT

**ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee
University of Leeds**

2 March 2015

Dear Stephania

Title of study: From Policy to Practice: The Effect of Teachers' Educational Beliefs and Values on Their Interpretation of School-Based Assessment Reform in Primary Schools in Malaysia
Ethics reference: AREA 14-090

I am pleased to inform you that the above research application has been reviewed by the ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and following receipt of your response to the Committee's initial comments, I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion as of the date of this letter. The following documentation was considered:

Document	Version	Date
AREA 14-090 Ethical_Review_Form_V3-3.doc (Stephania).pdf	2	27/02/15
AREA 14-090 Lettersfrom school.pdf	1	13/02/15
AREA 14-090 Participant information sheet and consent form.pdf	1	13/02/15
AREA 14-090 EPU.pdf	1	13/02/15
AREA 14-090 Risk Assessment-Stephania.pdf	1	13/02/15

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted at date of this approval, including changes to recruitment methodology. All changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAmendment>.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited. There is a checklist listing examples of documents to be kept which is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAudits>.

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Blaikie
Senior Research Ethics Administrator, Research & Innovation Service
On behalf of Dr Andrew Evans, Chair, AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee
CC: Student's supervisor(s)

Appendix P: Letter to Chen's head teacher to conduct study

Date: 9th July 2015

Dear Madam

I would like to inform you that on Saturday the 4th of July, I had interviewed one of your teachers. Your teacher was introduced to me through one of my initial participant who mentioned that she might hold information that I was looking for my study. For your information, I follow up information gained from previous interviews with my initial participants. I admit that it was entirely my mistake for not asking your permission because it was only an informal meeting at first. My intention was just to know if she has something that I was looking for with regards to SBA. Fortunately, she does have the knowledge, information and the experience that I needed.

Additionally, my study about SBA is to find out the way teachers translate this policy into action. It also aims to find out the reasons particular teachers are motivated in this approach of assessment, their motivation and how their understanding of it. It also seeks the barriers to this implementation in schools. Policy makers often expect us, as the implementers that we will do as we are told but without them noticing the challenges that we often faced in schools in conducting certain implementation. We are also pressured to obtaining good, excellent achievements every year but sometimes policy makers may overlooked at the sacrifices that we had often made for education (e.g. workloads, lack of teachers and those who are experts in a particular field, the trainings and courses conducted). These may influence the way we implement the initiative.

Understanding teachers and understanding the challenges will shed lights and knowledge for head of school, education officers, policy makers and implementers in providing the kind of help or assistant needed to implementing changes introduced to the school in the future and reasons why changes often fails (as in the case of PPSMI). In this study, I seek no errors and faults but to work together as educators to share our thoughts about changes made in the curriculum and how we could make it better. All information or statements provided will be kept strictly confidential and will not contain any markers of the school or teachers' identity.

For your information, I was a primary school teacher myself for 11 years before I began this study. I had worries about many changes in our education of the way training was conducted and for us to implement what is being asked for us to do. I had questions in my mind if other teachers are having similar difficulties.

I would like to make an application to have access in your school to conduct a study on one of your teachers whom I had interviewed and that if you also have something to share about SBA. Here attached are copies of approval letters from the Ministry of Education, State Education department, EPU to conduct research in primary schools in Sabah.


Yours Sincerely

Stephanja Albert Jonglai

University of Leeds

+60198622989/+4407760677229

Appendix Q: Letter of approval to conduct research in Malaysia

	UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI <i>Economic Planning Unit</i> Jabatan Perdana Menteri <i>Prime Minister's Department</i> Block B5 & B6 Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan 62502 PUTRAJAYA MALAYSIA	 EPU <small>ECONOMIC PLANNING UNIT JABATAN PERANCANG EKONOMI</small> Telefon : 603-8000 8000
---	---	---

Stepahania Albert Jonglai 16 Delphcourt, Delph Lane, West Yorkshire	Ruj. Tuan: Your Ref.: Ruj. Kami: Our Ref.: UPE 40/200/19/3186 (21) Tarikh: Date: 25 March 2013
--	--

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

With reference to your application, I am pleased to inform you that your application to conduct research in Malaysia has been approved by the **Research Promotion and Co-Ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department**. The details of the approval are as follows:

Researcher's name	:	STEPHANIA ALBERT JONGLAI
Passport No./ I.C No	:	761113-12-5632
Nationality	:	MALAYSIA
Title of Research	:	"FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS' INTERPRETATION OF SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT REFORM IN URBAN AND RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MALAYSIA"
Period of Research Approved	:	4 YEARS

2. Please collect your Research Pass in person from the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Parcel B, Level 4 Block B5, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya, Malaysia. Bring along **two (2) colour passport size photographs**. Kindly, **get an appointment date from us before you come to collect your research pass**.

"Merancang Ke Arah Kecemerlangan"

Appendix R: Sample of Chen's journal

Journal 1 : Week 24th – 28th August 2015

Conducted Listening and Speaking Assessment this week. Initially thought it would be boring and one-sided most of the time, given the fact that the children were quite reluctant to speak up in class most of the time. I had chosen the topic "What would I do if I have RM 1000?" and "If I could buy a gadget..." I had chosen these two topics because I find that most of the children have shown to me (in previous lessons) that they would speak up if the talking point is centred around these two material things.

True to my intuition, pupils performed quite well, at first. They would start off by saying what gadget they would buy, or what they would do with the RM 1000. Then they started to fidget, when I prompt them further about their choices, why? Don't they already have a phone? Why do they need a new one? Why do you want to buy a new phone with your RM 1000, when you already have a good iPad?

Most would fidget more, and more as I started to ask probing questions that needed them to think. Some, a girl or two, can answer really well. A few would stare at me, hoping I would give them more pointers.

Once in a while, I got glimpse of their home life. A girl told me that she wants to buy a bicycle if she had RM 1000. Then, she would save the rest. She said she is too tired to walk to school everyday. She wants to cycle to school. Her home is too far away. I choked. Of the 37 students of Year 5, she was the only one who wanted to buy a bicycle, and not a phone.

Then, another boy in Year 4 caught my attention. He wanted to give the money to his grandma. He said she is in the hospital. He misses her very much, and he wanted to give the money to her so that she can pay for her bills at the hospital. His mother left him 2 years ago, and grandma was the one taking care of him, until she got sick.

While others in their class is thinking of spending money to buy a new phone; these two's honest answers really captured my attention. Though they could only convey their thoughts in halting and limited English, I understood their attention well.

Journal 2 : Week 14th – 18th September 2015

The final week with Joel (from "And Something Weird Happened").

The children had lots of fun with Joel. Although some did not get the story really well, they could at least tell me (in halting and limited vocabulary) of Joel's misadventures, and what he experienced in the story.

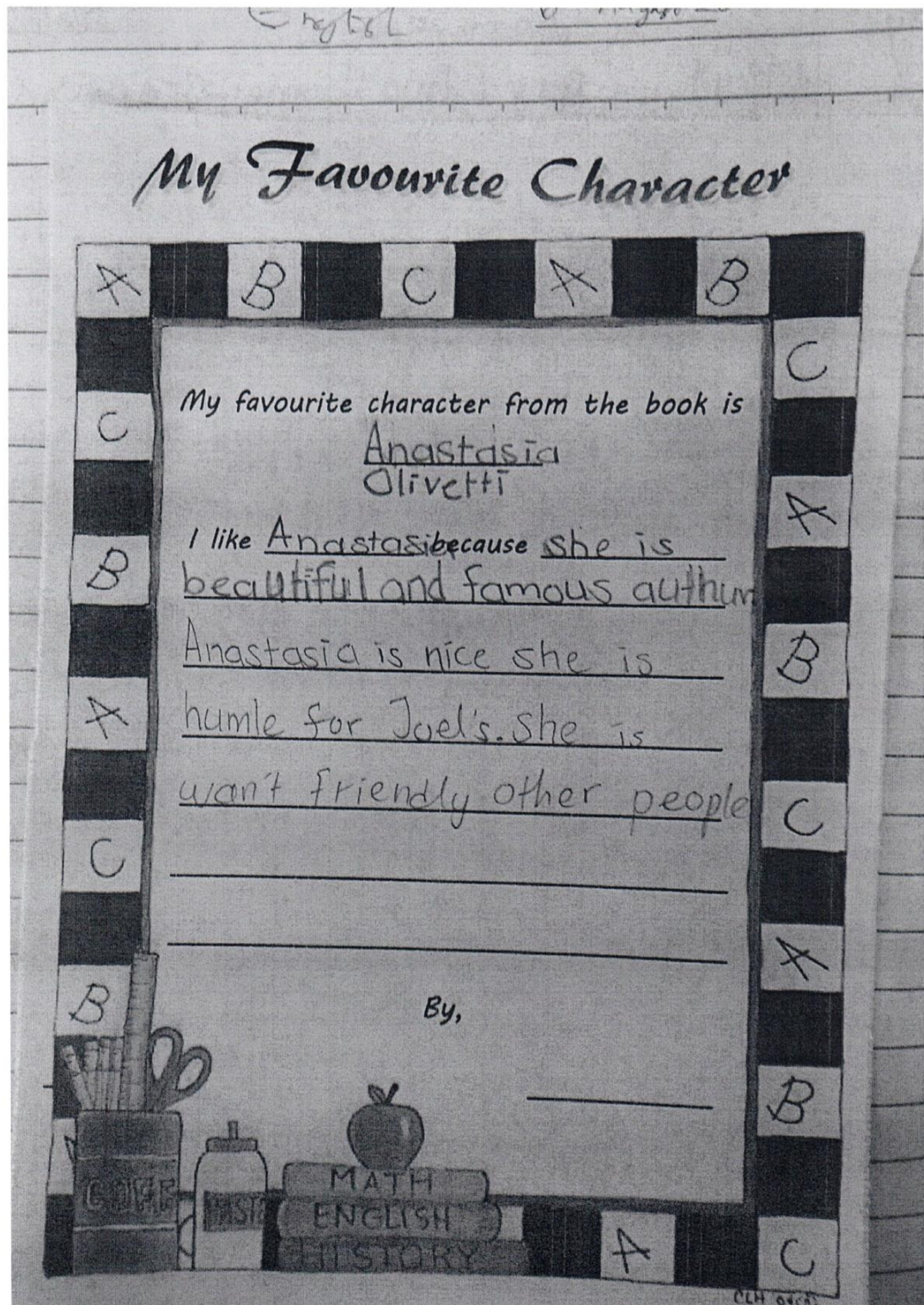
After recapping the story, I asked the children to list out the 3 people in Joel's story, to whom he had some connection. They listed them correctly, Anastasia Ollivetti, Mr Gelati and the Pizza Shack Manager. I then set them to the task of writing a thank you note to Joel from these characters. I used the Pizza Shack manager for my example, as I had foreseen that they would have problems writing a thank you note to Joel from the manager.

It was fun watching the pupils work. They had learnt to write thank you notes in previous lessons, so it should not be too hard. The effort they put in to be original is also very interesting. Some decorated their notes with items related to the writer, (ice-creams for Mr Gelati, and books for Anastasia). Some also wrote very interesting notes.

Appendix S: Sample of Chen's lesson plan

RANCANGAN MENGAJAR HARIAN		
PERKARA	TARIKH 13 th August 2015	HARI Thursday
English Year 5x	Learning Standards: 3.3.1 (b)	
10 - 8.10 am	Learning Outcomes: By the end of the lesson, pupils should be	
50 minutes)	able to:	
	(a) write a story about a dishonest milkman named Ramu and	
Theme: World of	give it a suitable ending & title.	
ories	Learning Aids: Padlet pages, slides presentation.	
	Learning Activities:	
opic: Unit 12 -	(a) Tcr. introduces the word 'milkman' & elicits answers from	
ories to learn	pupils. Tcr. relates to the lesson.	
om	(b). Pre-writing: Tcr. show slides of the story abt. Ramu the	
odule: Writing	milkman and elicits the storyline from pupils.	
	(c). Writing: Pupils write the story on their padlet page: padlet.com/	
CE: Creating	siachaiting / 5x Writing and share it with the whole class.	
	(d). Post-writing: Pupils read peer's work & select the best one for	
Handance:	them.	
	Reflections:	
	17/17 pupils wrote their story on padlet at a satisfactory level.	
English Year 1x	Learning Standards: 3.2.4, 3.1.2 (d), 3.1.2 (a).	
10 - 9.40 am	Learning Outcomes: By the end of the lesson, pupils should be	
40 minutes)	able to:	
	(a) listen to the word the teacher is saying & circle, write suitable	
Theme: World of	words to describe pictures and write initial sound in words.	
Knowledge	Learning Aids: Activity Book.	
	Learning Activities:	
opic: Unit 12 -	(a) Tcr. gets pupils ready to do the tasks.	
Beautiful Colours	(b). Tcr. say the words, and pupils circle the word they hear (pg	
	54).	
Module Revision	(c). Pps. describe the pictures with words learnt. (55)	
	(d). Pps. trace words with /f/ sound, identify words with /f/ or /ff/. (56)	
	(e). Pps. write the initial sounds of words to form other words. (57)	
	Reflections:	
Handance:	5/24 pupils finished on time. 19/24 needed more time.	

Appendix T: Sample of Chen's assessment (Students' work)



Appendix U: Sample of preliminary interview with Chen

Time of interview: 11.30am

Date of interview: 2/08/2015

Duration: 37:42 (*chen/11/08-15/L75-L130*)

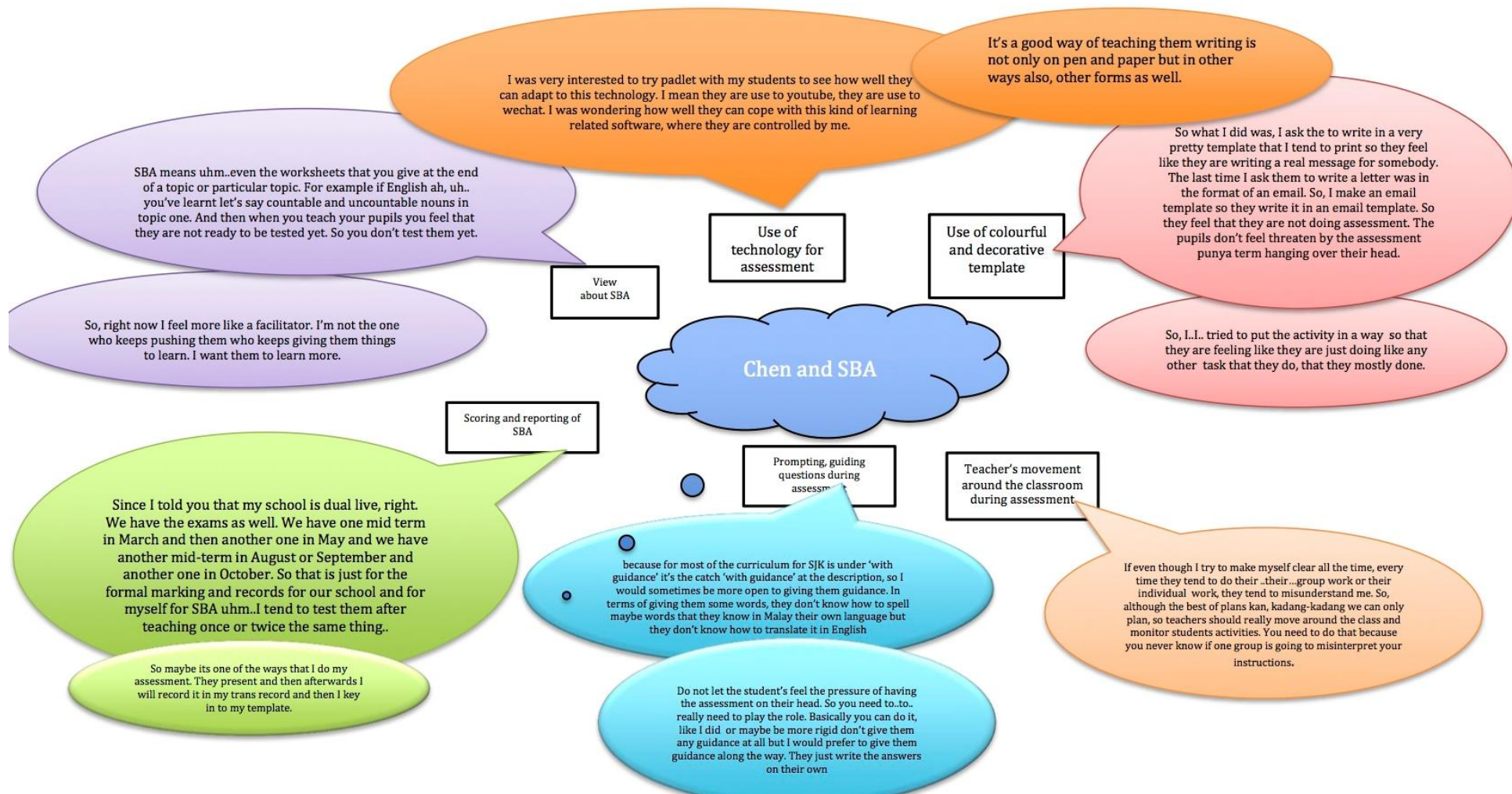
Me: How about you? What does SBA means to you and how do you feel about it?

Chen: For me SBA, SBA means you need to assess your pupils after they have learnt. It's an on-going process. We have been doing it for years actually. We don't understand that it is SBA. Somebody just go and gave it uh.. another name. For God sakes, come on la. You have been doing monthly test, right. Monthly test is SBA but SBA here, it's just simply means that you don't have to calculate the marks anymore. *Tak payah kira markah (no need to calculate marks)*. SBA means uhm..even the worksheets that you give at the end of a topic or particular topic. For example if English ah, uh.. you've learnt let's say countable and uncountable nouns in topic one. And then when you teach your pupils you feel that they are not ready to be tested yet. So you don't test them yet. Maybe much later, in the year you encounter the same topic again or maybe you encounter another topic that you can use to reteach uncountable and countable nouns. And then you feel that your pupils are ready for assessment then you assess. You give simple assessment like lists of items and then ask them to categories. Just like that-(repeated in Malay)-*Itu saja*. So what's so difficult about that doesn't mean you have to prepare a full set of formal test and then set a timetable, "ok, at 8.10 to 9.10 is the English test, ok we do the test now". And then you must uh.. all the.. the test paper that they have answered need to file in a specific portfolio for each of the pupils, no. No more. What you do is just give a simple exercise on the board pupils just copy it down. They can do it, finish. Key that in. That is your school based assessment, finish, end of story. These teachers they still thinking that SBA assessment means 'test' formal paper pen test. And you cannot give prop. *Boleh ba (can)*. Its up to you. If you feel that your pupils even weak why not give them pictures. Give them pointers. "Teacher *apa tu (what is)* sickle". "You don't know what sickle, ok, your grandmother use the sickle to cut the paddy. What do you think?" You still don't know, it's shape like this" then draw a picture. Maybe they know, kan(right). Help them. *Jangan, jangan...don't* be too stressed out about the assessment.

Me: So, what do you think the reason that they don't have a clear understanding of SBA in school even after five years of implementation? What do you think?

Chen: I think it's because of the initial courses. The initial courses the people who went to the *kursus(course)* for year one and two, right. The people who deliver the course, they themselves were in a blur. In a days they don't know what it meant by..by.. school based assessment. They just hear school based assessment and then keep a portfolio of what the pupils had done that means that they..they.. are just hearing the amount of work. They are not hearing that we are now assessing the pupils based on their capabilities what they had learnt. Year in we are not..apa ni..accumulating their..their learning. Do you know that SBA according to KSSR, you key in the pupils performance for that particular year and that's it. In the next year, they start a fresh. There is another set for them to accomplish. So meaning to say, Year One punya achievements is Year One punya achievements. So when they go to Year Two, it's another achievement for them. And its another milestone for them. If lets say in Year One they cannot achieve speaking independently about their personal interest maybe...maybe in Year Two they can do it. Maybe...Maybe... they can do it in Year One and maybe in Year Two they cannot do it. And then it comes to this, you know, sometimes the teachers just see all the *kelompok(group of skills)* of DSKP that there is a group of skills in the DSK. These skills are to assess together. You can do it together or you can do it one by one. But you must do both before you key in the standard performance and then when the teachers look all this *kelompok*, there are many *kelompok* you know. Listening and speaking sometimes there are four or five for reading there are three usually three and for writing there are six to seven. And then language arts, I think its another four. So what these teachers saw is that every three months they must finish all these assessment when actually in reality is no.

Appendix V: Mapping of Chen's SBA practices for validation



Appendix W: Sample of analysis using Nvivo

The screenshot displays the Nvivo software interface. The top menu bar includes FILE, HOME, CREATE, DATA, ANALYZE, QUERY, EXPLORE, LAYOUT, VIEW, and NODE. The left sidebar shows a tree view of the project structure, including folders for 'dennis', 'liz', 'Liz Chen, Dennis' factors', 'Teachers' Beliefs', 'Cases', 'Sentiment', 'Relationships', and 'Node Matrices'. The main window is divided into three panes. The left pane shows a list of nodes under the heading 'factors affecting the willingness and ability of SBA implementation'. The middle pane shows a table with columns 'Name', 'Sources', and 'References'. The right pane shows a text excerpt from a source, with a reference code and coverage percentage.

Name	Sources	References
education officers expectation	1	1
favour of examination	1	1
meeting discussion on examination performances	1	1
parents' expectation	1	1
teachers no choice but rely on exam results	1	1
Lack of training and knowledge	5	8
experience	2	2
knowledge about AFL	3	3
teachers' attention	1	1
the training	1	2
time factor	1	1
recording and scoring	4	8
no exact guidelines	1	3
teachers' assessment and recording	1	4
teachers' scoring and officers expectations	3	3
workload	1	2
teachers' workload	3	6
administrative duties	3	5
school performance depends on documentation	1	1
schools' activities	1	1
the effect of other reform initiatives	4	8
challenging	1	4
difficulty in handling	1	4
lesson interruption	1	4
Linus programme	2	3
SBA and LINUS completely contradict each other	1	1
the expectation of LINUS progress by education officers	2	2

education officers expectation
reference coded [4.09% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 4.09% Coverage
But unfortunately, education officers they never asked. 'Do they like to learn English?' When they come, they would start asking 'what is the percentage for exam?' how many pass? How many A's? what is you KPI (key Performance Indicator)? That's the word they always use- KPI. What to do, right.

Appendix X: Conferences, modules and workshops attended

Research Modules Audited

No.	Modules	Date
1	EDUC5060M Getting Started: Research Questions and Approaches in Education	May 2014
2	EDUC5062M Qualitative Data: processes of collection, interpretation and analysis	November-December 2014

Courses/Workshops

No.	Courses/Workshops	Date
1	Starting your research degree	14/04/2014
2	Using Endnote- Keeping records-references and notes: Online Webiner (An introduction)	23/04/2014
3	Time management during your research degree	12/06/2014
4	University of Leeds welcome PGR student	23/06/2014
5	Speed reading and mind mapping	17/07/2014
6	ESSL Graduate conference 2015 1 st committee meeting	17/11/2014
7	NVIVO Part 1	07/01/2014
8	NVIVO Part 2	08/01/2014
9	SDDU: qualitative research methodologies	20/01/2015
10	Advanced Literature Searching	09/02/2015
11	SDDU: Interviews	12/03/2015
12	SDDUPGR: Preparing for doctoral viva	10/01/2017
13	Qualitative Data Analysis in Practice: 'Experience, Challenges and Possibilities' funded by LEAP Researcher Training Hub, University of Leeds. Paper presentation.	27/02/2017

Conferences

No	Conferences	Date
1	10 th Research Students' Education Conference (RSEC) School of Education, University of Leeds	30/05/2014

2	10 th BAAL Language Learning and Teaching Special Interest Group Conference 'Recognizing complexity in language learning and teaching'	3/07/2014- 4/07/2014
3	ESSL PGR Conference , University of Leeds (2015)- Organizing Committee	25/03/2015
4	10 th Research Students' Education Conference, University of Leeds, University of York- WRDTC (07/06/2016) –Paper Presentation	07/06/2016
5	WISE 21- WRDTC Interdisciplinary Summer Conference on Education in the 21 st Century, King's Manor, University of York (24/06/2016)- Paper Presentation	24/06/2016
6	Asia Pacific Institute of Advance Research 2016 Conference (Second International Conference Theory and Practice- ICTP-OCT 2016) Hotel Oaks on Collins Melbourne Australia- "Explore the Possibilities" Abstract paper accepted for presentation	28/10/16- 29/10/16

